

# Utah's Water Future

## Local Perspectives on Water Issues

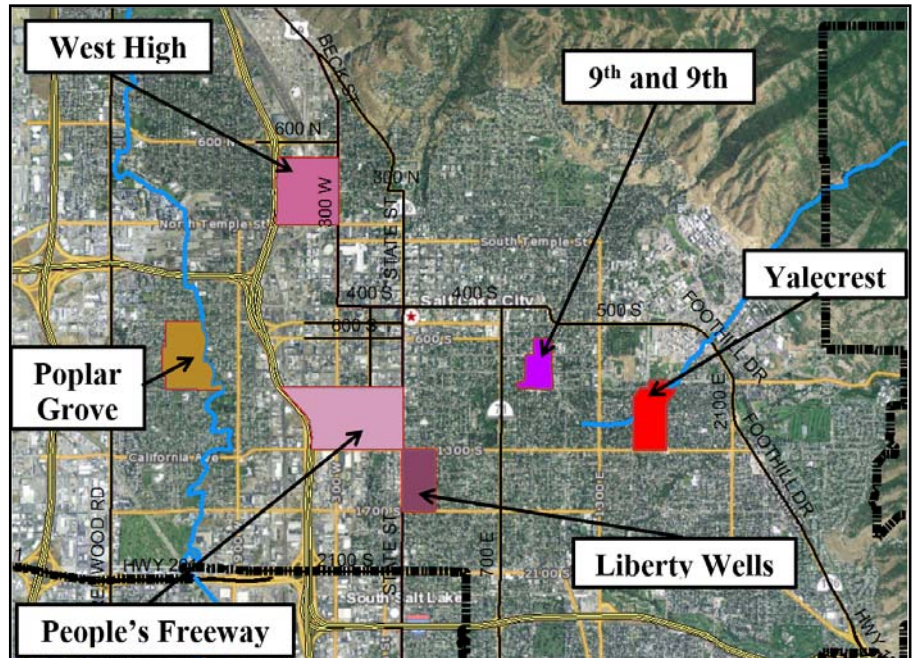
*Highlights from the 2014 iUTAH Household Survey*

### SALT LAKE CITY HIGHLIGHTS



#### **Background:**

In July 2014, researchers from Utah State University and the University of Utah conducted a survey about water issues with randomly selected residents of six neighborhoods in Salt Lake City (see map). We received responses from 531 residents (an overall response rate of 53%). Characteristics of respondents were similar to census estimates for each neighborhood (and the combined sample is similar to the city as a whole), though the survey somewhat over-represents older, more educated, and home-owning residents.



#### **Household Water & Lawns**

##### **People know how much they spend, but not how much they use**

- Around half of Salt Lake City respondents (56%) reported a high familiarity with how much they spend on water each month, but fewer (32%) were familiar with the volume of water they use.
- This varied widely by neighborhood—respondents in Yalecrest and Poplar Grove were most familiar with both cost and volume. Areas with many renters had less familiarity with water spending.

##### **Lawns generally watered by residents, but landlords also important in some neighborhoods**

- Overall, 73% of Salt Lake City respondents watered their own lawns; 15% are watered by landlords.
- Nearly all Yalecrest respondents watered their own lawn, compared to half in 9th & 9th and a third in People's Freeway.

##### **Few water during the day**

- Most residents (97%) reported watering their lawn mainly in the morning, evening, or at night.

##### **Weather plays a key factor in watering decisions...**

- Nearly all of households (86%) said they try to adjust their lawn watering behaviors to the weather.

##### **...but conservation, property values, and time are also considerations.**

- About 77% indicated a desire to conserve water was important to their lawn watering decisions.
- Majorities said minimizing time spent watering (60%), maintaining property values (59%), and keeping a regular schedule (56%) were also important considerations.
- Water conservation was a particularly important goal in the West High, Liberty Wells, and Yalecrest neighborhoods.

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## Water Conservation

### Many residents think that they can do more to conserve water...

- Over half (55%) of Salt Lake City respondents felt they could do more to reduce their indoor water use, while over a third (40%) thought they could do more to reduce outdoor water use.
- 9th & 9th, Yalecrest, and Liberty Wells residents were most likely to think they can do more to reduce indoor water use (59-67%). Yalecrest residents were much more likely to believe they can reduce outdoor use (58%).

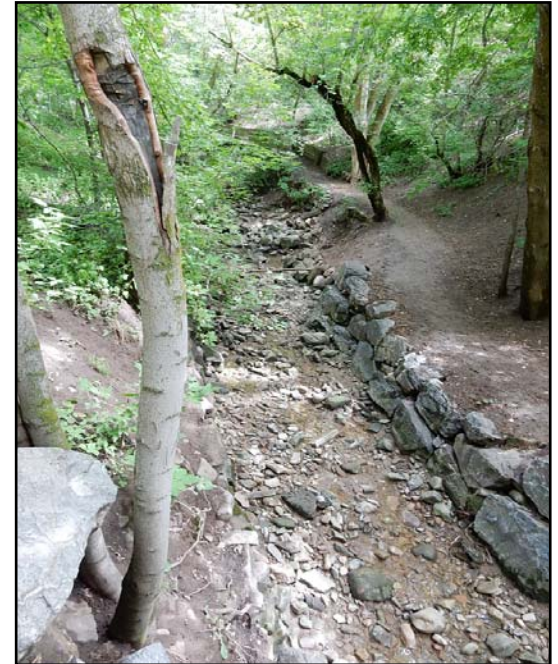
### ...but only a small percentage report have actually decreased their water use

- A minority (22%) of Salt Lake City respondents reported that they actually decreased either indoor or outdoor water use over the last five years.
- Respondents in 9th & 9th, Yalecrest, and Liberty Wells were most likely to report decreases in both indoor and outdoor use.

### People were most willing to conserve if:

- It ensures future supply for their home (85%)
- It improves fish & wildlife habitat (78%)
- It reduces their water bills (75%)
- It improves urban parks & open spaces (71%), or
- It ensures future supply for farms (68%)

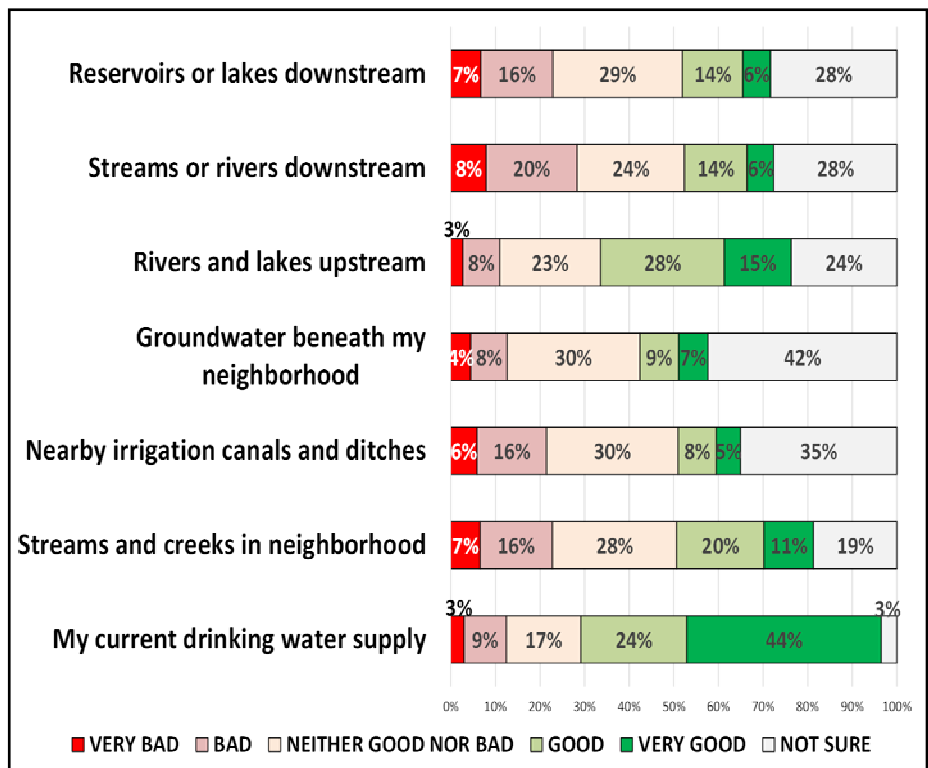
People were least willing to conserve if savings are used to increase development (36%)



## Water Quality

### Local water quality was generally seen as good.

- Most (68%) of Salt Lake City respondents said their drinking water quality was “good” or “very good”, while just 12% rated it as “bad” or “very bad”
- Less than half rated water quality in rivers and lakes upstream (43%) and streams and creeks in their neighborhood (31%) as good.
- Slightly fewer (20%) indicated they felt downstream rivers and reservoirs were of good quality, while 23-28% rated these as bad quality.
- Respondents in People’s Freeway and Poplar Grove rated local water quality as less good. Yalecrest respondents rated drinking water much more positively.



## Concerns about Water and Other Issues

### Respondents believed current water supplies are more adequate than future water supplies

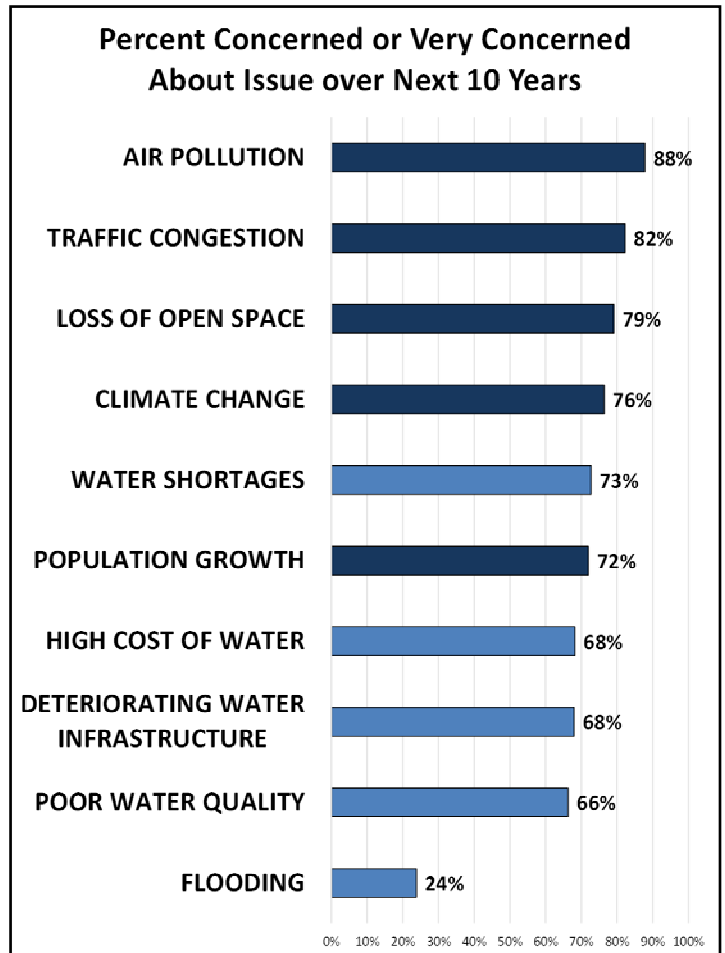
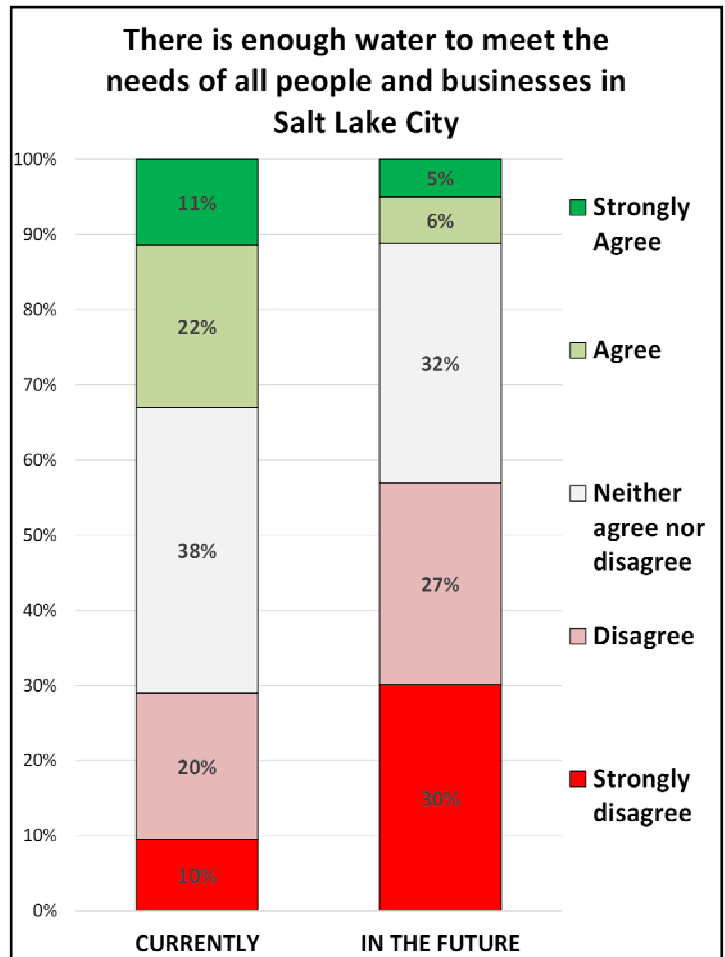
- A third of Salt Lake City respondents (33%) thought there was enough water to meet current needs in this city
- Only 11% were confident in Salt Lake City's future supply, and 57% of respondents were concerned about the city's future water supply.
- Yalecrest respondents were more likely to agree current supply is adequate (44%); Liberty Wells respondents were least optimistic about current and future supply.

### Farm water use was not a big concern.

- Most (71%) of respondents believed that residential lawns use too much water, yet just 13% felt agriculture currently uses too much water.
- Poplar Grove and People's Freeway respondents were notably less likely to think too much water is used for residential uses (54-59%); respondents in Liberty Wells and 9th & 9th were most likely to see excessive residential use (81-83%).

### Water related issues take a back seat to growth concerns, except for cost.

- Air pollution (88%), traffic congestion (82%) and loss of open space (79%) were the issues of greatest concern to Salt Lake City respondents, followed by climate change (76%).
- Among water issues, the greatest concern related to water shortages (73%). Concerns about the high cost of water (68%), deteriorating water infrastructure (68%), and poor water quality (66%) were cited by two-thirds or more.
- Growth concerns (in dark blue) were most frequently cited by respondents in the Yalecrest and 9th & 9th neighborhoods.
- In two neighborhoods, Poplar Grove and Liberty Wells, the high cost of water was their top ranked water-related concern.
- By far the lowest level of concern was expressed about flooding (24%); however, roughly a third (31-36%) of lower elevation neighborhood respondents (People's Freeway, Poplar Grove, and Liberty Wells) listed flooding as a concern.





## How Should Salt Lake City Respond to Short-Term Water Shortages?

### Voluntary approaches most popular

- Salt Lake City respondents indicated a very high level of support for educational efforts (91%) and voluntary water restrictions (87%).

### Majority support mandatory limits

- To deal with short-term shortages, most Salt Lake City respondents also supported watering restrictions in parks, golf courses, and public properties (78%) or mandatory restrictions on watering lawns (71%).

### Some slight neighborhood differences

- Support for mandatory restrictions was highest in 9th & 9th (81%) and Yalecrest (75%) neighborhoods, but lowest in Poplar Grove (63%) and People's Freeway (65%).
- Opposition to mandatory restrictions was highest among respondents in the Liberty Wells (12%) and Poplar Grove (16%) neighborhoods.

## Support for Long Term Water Policies in Salt Lake City

### Increasing water supply from storage and reuse

- Reusing treated wastewater for residential irrigation was the most popular option, with support from 79% of Salt Lake City respondents (and only 5% opposed).
- Majorities supported city efforts to build new water storage facilities (61%).

### Most supported having development pay for itself

- Limiting future housing unless water supplies are secured by developers was supported by 72% of respondents.

### A majority supported improving storm-water management

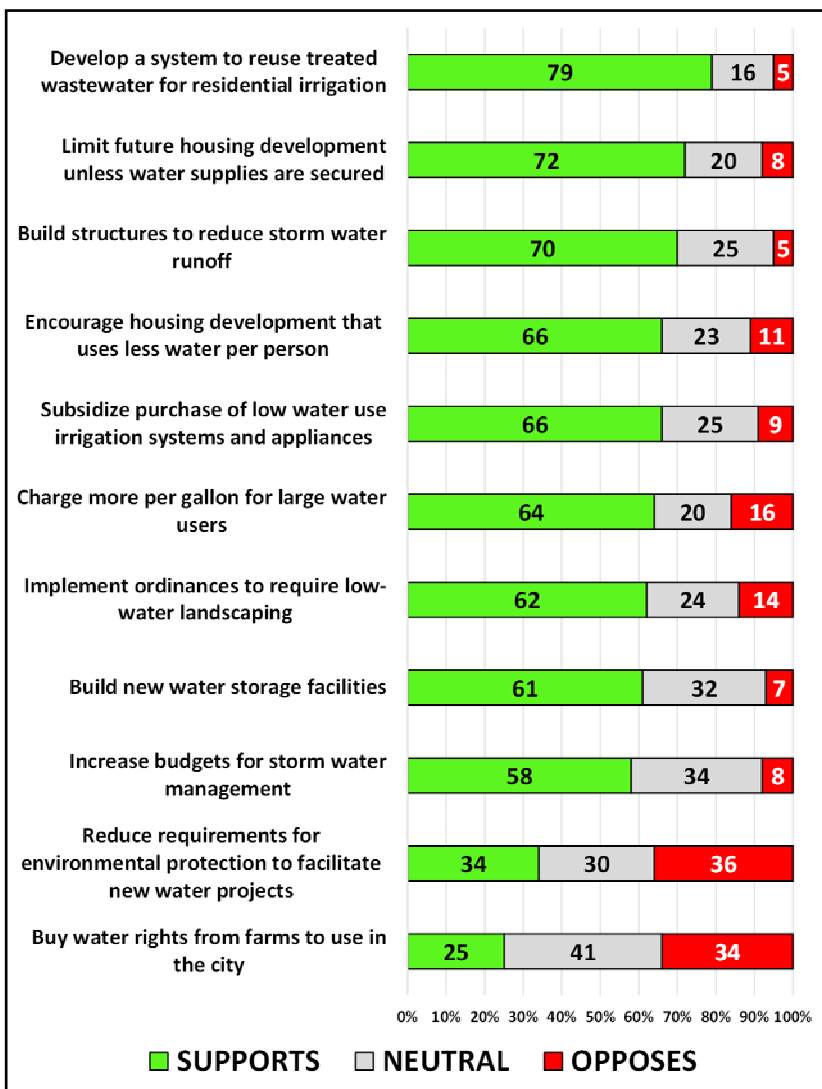
- Over half supported local funding to build structures to reduce stormwater runoff (70%) and increased budgets for storm-water management (58%).

### There was strong support for incentivizing conservation

- About two-thirds (66%) supported city subsidies for low water irrigation systems and appliances, encouraging forms of housing development that use less water per person, charging more per gallon for large water users (64%) and implementing ordinances to require low water landscaping (62%).
- There was more opposition than support for city policies to: reduce requirements for environmental protection to facilitate new water projects (34% support vs. 36% opposed), or buy water rights from farms for city use (25% vs. 34%).

### Neighborhood differences

- Support for conservation-oriented policies was highest among Yalecrest, 9th & 9th, and West High neighborhoods, and lowest in the Poplar Grove neighborhood.
- Support for increasing water storage was highest in People's Freeway, West High, and Poplar Grove.



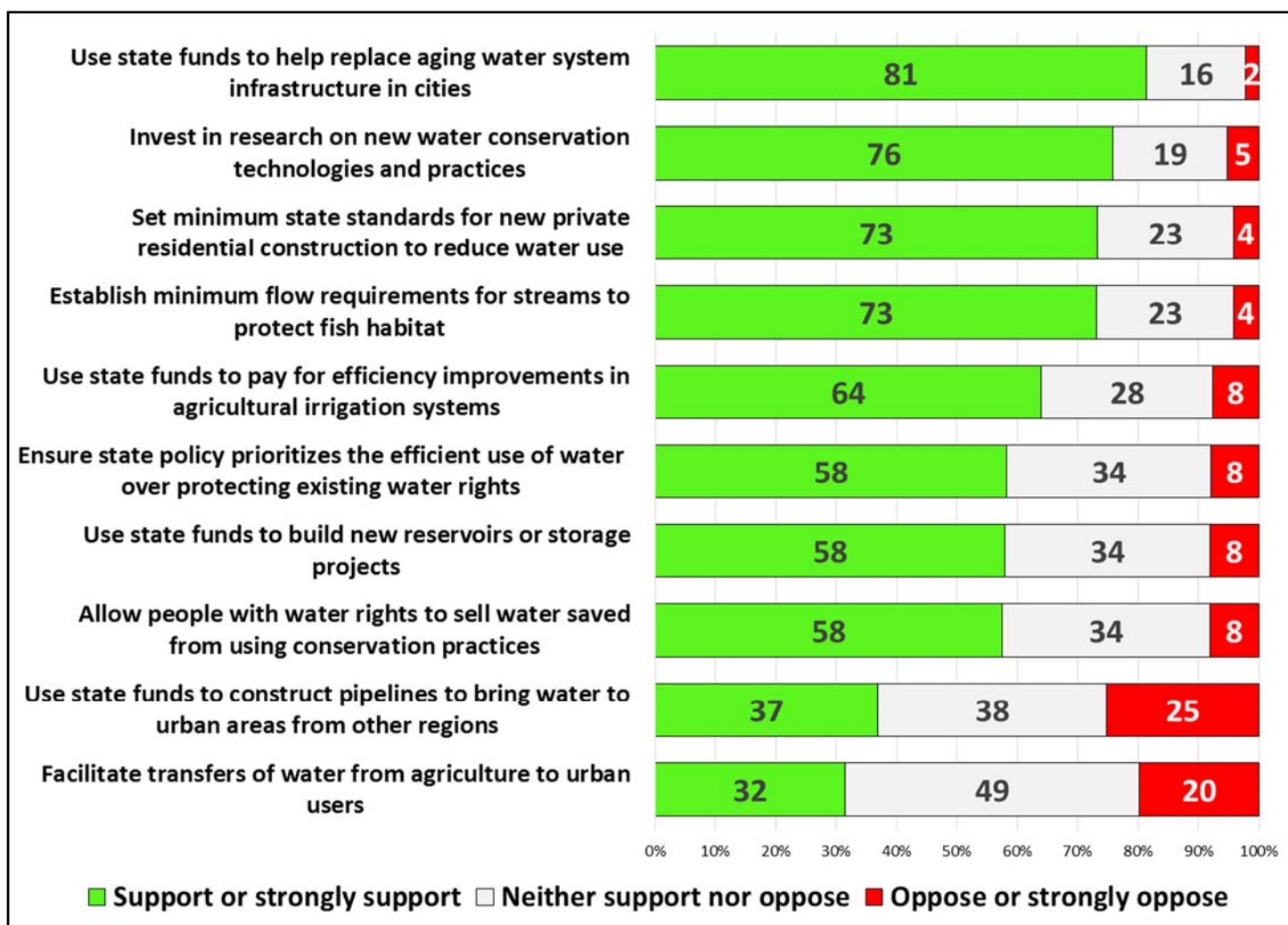
## Support for State Water Goals & Policies

### **GOALS: State should ensure supply while protecting water quality and agriculture**

- Nearly all supported state goals to ensure a supply of drinking water (96%) and protect water quality (97%).
- Most supported a goal of protecting wetland and wildlife habitat (83%) and ensuring future water supplies for agriculture (78%).
- There was more moderate support among Salt Lake City respondents for state goals to save taxpayer money (44%), and ensure the supply of water for economic development (40%).

### **POLICIES: There is support for wide range of state policies**

- The highest support was for the use of state funds to replace aging city water infrastructure (81%).
- Roughly three-fourths supported using state funds to do research on water conservation technologies (76%) set minimum standards for new residential construction (73%), and establish minimum stream flows to protect fish habitat (73%).
- Over half supported using state funds to improve agricultural irrigation efficiency (64%), using state funds to build new reservoirs or storage projects (58%), prioritizing efficiency over water rights (58%), and allowing sale of water saved from conservation (56%).
- About a third (37%) supported constructing pipelines to bring water from other regions to urban areas, and state policies to facilitate transfers of water from farms to urban users (32%). The highest levels of opposition were also cited for these two policies (20-25% opposed).



## Information Sources

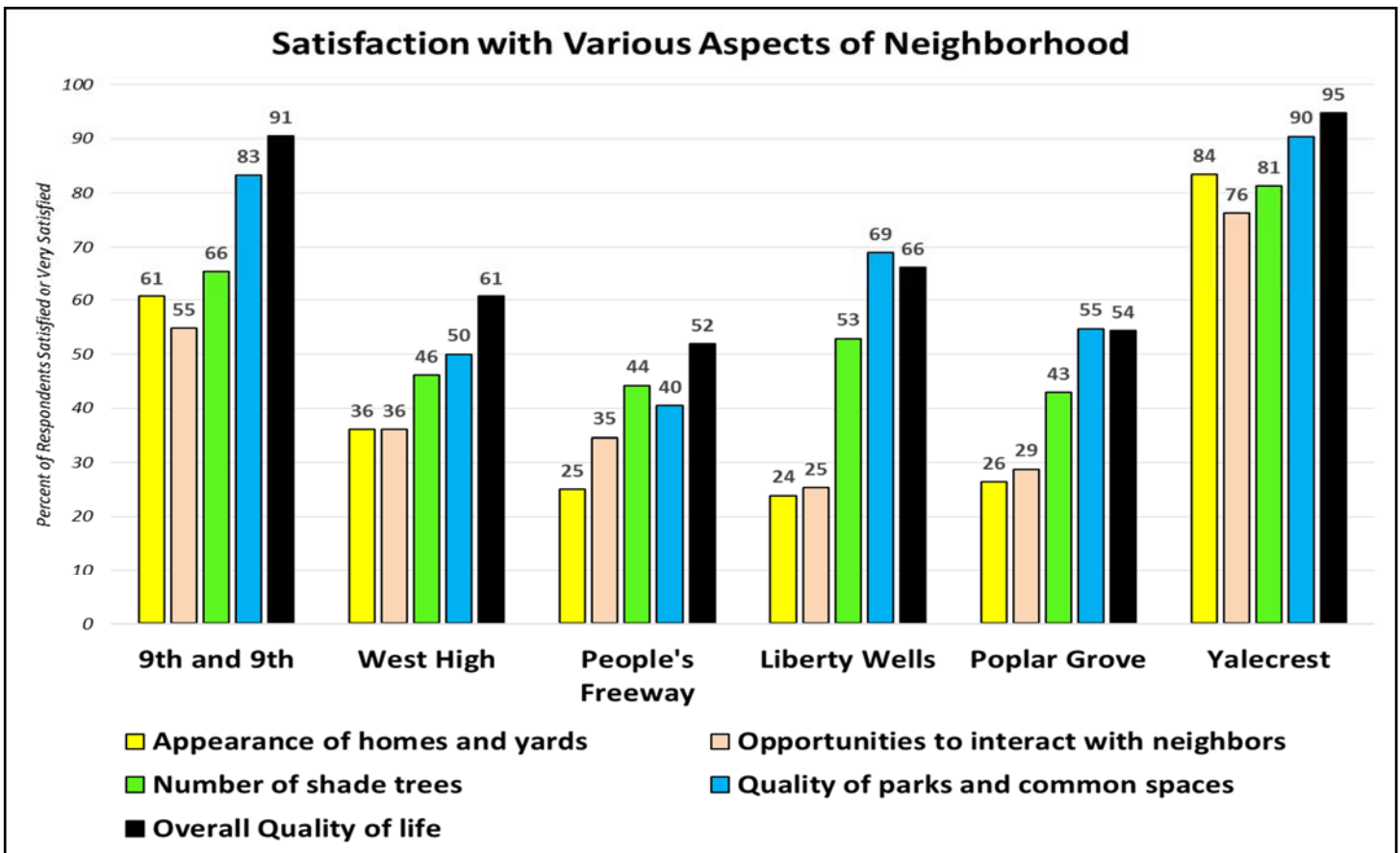
### Mass media, the internet and friends or neighbors were the most important sources of information about water issues

- Nearly three-fourths (74%) of respondents said they get information from TV or Radio;
- Almost two-thirds (65%) said they use internet or social media to get water information; about half (52%) said friends and neighbors were important sources of water information.
- Almost half (49%) said they get water information from a newspaper (46% listed the Salt Lake Tribune, and 14% the Deseret News).
- The least cited sources of water information are mailings from providers (46%) and homeowner or neighborhood associations (8%)

## Satisfaction with Neighborhood

### Most Salt Lake City residents are satisfied with their neighborhood

- Over 72% were satisfied with the overall quality of life in their neighborhood. Majorities were satisfied with the quality of parks and common spaces (67%) and number of shade trees (57%). Slightly less than half were satisfied with the appearance of homes and yards (46%) and opportunities to interact with neighbors (45%).
- People in 9th & 9th and Yalecrest generally reported the highest satisfaction levels.



If you would like more detailed information about the survey results (overall and by neighborhood), full reports are posted on our website:

**[www.iutahepscor.org/hhsurvey](http://www.iutahepscor.org/hhsurvey)**