



August 2019



D. Blair Camp  
Mayor

[mayor@murray.utah.gov](mailto:mayor@murray.utah.gov)

801-264-2600

## Community Identity

What is community identity, and why is it important? One definition of community identity includes factors that combine to create a community's distinct identity, such as a blend of special geography, architecture, history, and economic activity. Author and professor, Al Condeluci, observed that there is an ongoing tension between individual identity and our roles in the community. He notes, "As time marches on it seems that the notion of individualism has become more dominant in this balance in the world around us. People have seemed to retreat more into their individual world, at the expense of their communities."

So what is the community identity of Murray City? Prior to August 6, 2000, many people believed that the identity of Murray were the two smokestacks at the corner of 5300 South and State Street, and that the loss of those stacks would be the loss of Murray City identity forever. On the Sunday morning that the stacks were demolished, one observer in the crowd, estimated at 10,000 people, was quoted as saying, "We're devastated. The worst thing you ever could have seen happened here. There was so much history and it's gone now."

Now, nearly 20 years after the stacks came down, Murray still has a strong community identity, just a slightly different one. That identity now includes the Intermountain Medical Center (IMC) campus, the flagship medical facility for Intermountain Healthcare, which can be seen for miles around the valley. Murray's identity continues to include a successful regional shopping mall, high-end auto dealers, our well known and well-utilized parks, recreation programs, and senior recreation center. Murray is known as an independent community with our police, fire, and power departments, and other city services that are self-provided. Murray's identity includes appealing neighborhoods and quality schools.



Above all, I believe our community identity embraces the many outstanding residents who volunteer for the city, the schools, the senior recreation center, the medical center, and who go about quietly in their own neighborhoods doing good for others.

Murray City is at a crossroads for further development along the State Street corridor between 4800 South and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and west to the railroad tracks. Plans for a new city hall on west 4800 South are underway and a new fire station is under construction. There are exciting opportunities to replace the obsolete, dilapidated buildings in this block and along State Street with new, modern buildings that Murray residents and visitors can enjoy and be proud of for many years to come. A few historic structures that are considered significant can be saved and renovated, but not all the buildings on this block are significant, or even interesting. They are just tired old structures that have served their purposes over the years.

Not everyone agrees with my assessment, and I appreciate that there are other points of view. However, I maintain that it's time to bring something new and better to the community along this stretch of State Street, something interesting that will be inviting for the public. Murray City won't lose its community identity. I predict that history will demonstrate that Murray's residents embrace the fact that our community is much more than a former smelter town, and that it includes a diversity of architecture, old and new, that our city can be proud of.