The People Have Spoken
by Mayor Peter Corroon, Salt Lake County

The people have spoken. Not all of the people and they haven’t addressed all of the issues, but for the most part, property owners and residents in the unincorporated areas and our six townships appear to be content living in the unincorporated areas of Salt Lake County with county government serving as their local municipal government.

The Utah State Legislature three years ago, under the provisions of House Bill 40 (HB 40), mandated a process for Salt Lake County to survey citizens in the unincorporated area to determine what primary local government they want. Unincorporated residents live either within six unincorporated townships (Copperton, White City, Emigration Canyon, Millcreek, Kearns & Magna) or other areas outside of both townships and cities. The survey, which included both a mail survey and phone survey, was conducted by the Center for Public Policy & Administration at the University of Utah.

The results surprised me and many others. The phone survey results showed that:

- 49.47% of respondents want to remain as townships
- 16.36% want to remain in the unincorporated county, not as a township
- 14.03% want to annex into existing cities
- 5.86% want to incorporate/form their own city
- 2.25% chose another solution
- 11.98% didn’t answer or didn’t know

For the mail-in survey, the results showed that:

- 59.88% of respondents want to remain as a township
- 13.39% want to remain unincorporated, not in a township
- 15.27% want to annex into existing cities
- 6.09% want to incorporate/form their own city
- 1.68% want some other solution
- 3.69% didn’t answer or didn’t know

The results show between 66% and 73% of respondents prefer their status as residents of Salt Lake County’s unincorporated area, either inside township boundaries or outside those boundaries. Services provided to our unincorporated area include trash collection, recycling, Sheriff’s policing, planning and zoning, snow removal, and street maintenance. These municipal-type services are funded by property taxes paid by property owners within the unincorporated area.

So we have the results of the survey; it’s been presented to the nine cooperating municipalities and the six unincorporated townships and community councils. The next step is working with the legislature to determine the future of the county unincorporated service area. The Township statute ends in 2010. HB 40 envisioned a process that would give the legislature critical information to make determinations of what steps it should take to address local governance in Salt Lake County. So, with that survey in hand, I plan to support a resolution at the legislature that protects the townships.

The survey was the first item mandated by the HB 40 legislation. The second was for the County and the 9 participating cities to work together to create an implementation plan based on the results of the survey. I support that same group, the Working Committee (5 city, 5 township, and 2 county representatives) create that plan.
This legislatively-mandated survey makes a strong case for self determination for residents and property owners in Salt Lake County’s unincorporated areas. That’s the message I hope to take to Capitol Hill during the next legislative session. I also encourage our partner cities in this HB 40 process to join us in a collaborative effort to support the survey results.

See the Survey Background and Frequently Asked Questions

Go to the HB40 Survey Website