Efficiency and conservation in new and existing M&I water use creates savings for future growth and can also conserve water to be delivered to Great Salt Lake.

Summary

Policies for water-smart M&I growth financially incentivize high water-use efficiency in new development. Policies can require that conservation savings partially or fully offset new water demand in existing M&I uses. Offsets can be tailored to meet local community needs and facilitated by water providers. These efforts reduce market pressures for “buy-and-dry” agriculture-to-urban water transfers and increase the ability to lease or purchase agricultural water for Great Salt Lake. Water-smart growth implemented now helps deliver ongoing, long-term use reductions and avoids future water conservation costs. More aggressive implementation of water-smart practices (up to considering water-neutral growth) could secure water demand offsets over the next 30-40 years.

Key facts and insights

- **Growth** – Utah is projected to grow by 2.2 million people between 2020 and 2060, exceeding the 1.8 million people it added between 1980 and 2020. About 85% of projected population and employment growth will occur in Great Salt Lake Watershed.

- **M&I water depletions** – Depletions will potentially increase 80,000 AF between 2020 and 2060 due to projected population growth, climate warming, and diminishing returns on conservation and efficiency gains.

- **Water demand offset policies** – Successfully implemented nationally, these policies create ways to estimate water demand in new developments, calculate savings of water efficiency measures, and verify conservation savings and return on investment from water use offsets. Offset ratios can be structured to accelerate savings and also secure some water for Great Salt Lake in the near term.

- **Programmatic investments** – Water efficiency and conservation are realized through educational, incentive, and regulatory approaches. Accelerating water demand management will require public and private investments in institutional programs to implement change across all M&I uses.

Policy options and tradeoffs

Effective and equitable water-smart M&I growth requires existing M&I users to create water conservation savings. It also needs new development to meet the highest water efficiency standards when using those savings offsets. Combinations of on-site and off-site efficiency measures ensure new and redeveloped construction uses less new water in overall developments. Policy options include those listed to the right.