



## Technical Assistance to Nampa Development Corporation



**June 2011**

## ***About ULI – the Urban Land Institute***

**ULI**—the Urban Land Institute is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has more than 30,000 members in over 90 countries representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. **The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.**

**ULI IDAHO** is the Idaho District Council of ULI. District Councils are ULI at the local level and are now organized in over 62 regions worldwide. ULI Idaho membership is from Idaho and Western Montana and is a diversified cross section of professionals involved in all aspects of the real estate and land use industry: developers, lawyers, financiers, academics, elected officials, regulators, builders, marketers, environmentalists, planners, architects and realtors. In 2010, 8% of our members belonged to the public and non-profit sector.

## ***About ULI Idaho Community Outreach***

Tapping into the diversity and breadth of the ULI Idaho membership, the District Council provides community outreach in a number of other ways. The district council has: sponsored two studies of in-fill development in partnership with Idaho Smart Growth, provided scholarships to university students pursuing degrees in the development industry, partnered on a statewide analysis of the Idaho Land Use Planning Act with the universities and other organizations, presented training sessions on Development 101 to local officials, planners and the Association of Idaho Cities, and taught classes on real estate development in the BSU MBA program.

In March 2009, ULI Idaho hosted a Mayor's Forum in which Treasure Valley Mayors articulated their visions for creating sustainable Downtown development. In response, a Task Force was created of nineteen ULI Idaho members who over a six month period studied how valley cities could improve the sustainability of their downtowns. The task force findings were published in a report, "Sustainable Downtown Development in the Treasure Valley".

In October 2010, a workshop on Public-Private Partnerships was held in which the cities brought forward case studies and applied the principles learned at the workshop. As a follow-up to the workshop, ULI Idaho then asked the cities if they would like technical assistance from the district council in addressing the specific issues of the case studies. The application from the Nampa Development Corporation is the first request reviewed, and this report is a response to their request.

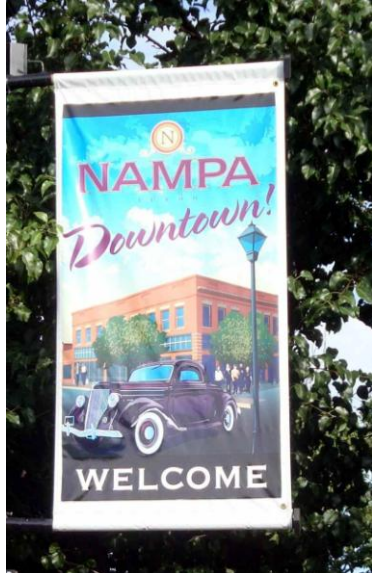
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## Executive Summary



All of us at ULI Idaho see tremendous potential in downtown Nampa. The historic core of downtown has a strong base of attractive buildings, energetic tenants, interesting activities and involved stakeholders. The table is set for downtown Nampa to thrive as the economy improves.

Nampa Development Corporation (NDC) asked us to address a list of specific questions in our report. While this report goes far beyond these initial questions, here is a brief summary of our answers:

**What is the value of the library as it relates to the value of the pivot block?** The library cannot drive development of the pivot block because both market conditions and the traffic pattern surrounding the pivot block preclude its development for some time. The library project will have a far bigger impact if it is located and designed to strengthen activity near the historic core of downtown.

**Have conditions changed since the downtown plan was developed?**

The market is dramatically different than it was five years ago. NDC should rethink its plans accordingly.

**How can the City spur private sector development?** It is not realistic to expect private sector development in the short-term. A better plan is to focus on increasing activity in the downtown area, which will create private demand as the market improves.

**Is the current market demand study still accurate?** A new study ultimately will be needed, but we do not see a study as a key priority at this time as private development demand will be difficult to gauge and the utility of a study will be limited in the current market. We recommend that NDC revisit the study at a later date.

Given the fundamental change in direction we recommend, this report goes beyond NDC's questions to address what we see as the right next steps for downtown Nampa. Our key conclusions are as follows:

1. Focus on the historic core.
2. Increase activity.
3. Maximize the impact of the library project on the historic core.
4. Create engaging open space.
5. Improve the traffic pattern.

We expand on these recommendations below.

**Focus and Engage.** As we all know, the economy has not bounced back as we had hoped and waiting for a private developer to invest in downtown Nampa is not wise. The inability to attract capital is a very real constraint on new development as well as major remodels. However, the opportunity for progress exists, primarily because of the strengths of the historic core of downtown Nampa, including attractive buildings, energetic tenants interesting activities and involved stakeholders. NDC should build on these

strengths to set the stage for long-term private development. We recommend a summit with downtown businesses as a first step, and would be pleased to help facilitate such an event.

**Energize.** A strong downtown is not about buildings; it is about “place making,” in other words, creating a place where people want to hang out. Downtown Nampa needs more energy, activities and reasons for citizens and private investors to be there. Downtown businesses need to be engaged to find the mix of activities that work for Nampa. In addition, we believe that strengthening the Nampa Downtown Association is an essential step in energizing the downtown. If downtown Nampa is to increase the level of activities and programs, it must be someone’s job. It is time for the downtown association to look hard at the possibility of hiring paid professional staff.

**Maximize the impact of the new library.** The Nampa Library has the opportunity to act as a draw for all types of residents and could act as a real catalyst for downtown growth. Proper placement and design of this facility will be very important. A location near the historic core will not only add energy and foot-traffic to this portion of downtown, but by focusing on a single area, it will help create a “critical mass” of activity that can be self-sustaining. With the proper design and layout the library can become more than a building. In addition to designing the library to serve both traditional City library visitors as well as students, efforts should be made to expand the definition of library beyond books to other ancillary services. The library should play host to events, programs and activities that give city residents a reason to come downtown. As part of this effort, the downtown plan should be revised to reflect new market realities and a greater focus on the historic core.

**Create Engaging Open Space.** To be a successful urban public space an appropriate and current program needs to be implemented. The City of Nampa needs to examine the current downtown fabric and evaluate if the current location is the best site for the intended use. In order to properly evaluate the site opportunities, the City of Nampa needs to determine uses that will extend the use of the open space throughout the entire year. Some of these uses might be: small public events, theatre and plays, activity and playground areas for children, spaces for relaxing or meeting friends, public markets, music festivals, art shows, and seasonal Nampa based cultural events. Many local businesses such as bakeries, coffee shops, cafes and restaurants would directly benefit from the downtown pedestrian traffic.

**Improve the traffic pattern.** The current traffic pattern creates significant barriers to downtown development, especially the area to the west of the historic core. The state highway on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenues is the biggest problem, but the one-way couplet on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets also inhibits development. This issue needs to be studied carefully with stakeholder input. We suggest several possible solutions including: (1) diverting truck traffic from downtown; (2) rerouting the state highway, either by using the pivot block to connect 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenues, or by redirecting the traffic pattern on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets to make the state highway traffic flow better; and (3) making 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets two-way through downtown.



## ***Assessment of Downtown Assets and Challenges***

Downtown Nampa has tremendous potential. We see a strong core of historic buildings radiating southward from the railroad depot at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street. In this area, a significant number of strong businesses have sprung up and have begun to see success. The owners of these businesses are energetic, entrepreneurial and willing to work together. A number of successful activities take place in downtown, including the farmer's market and downtown music events. We see a critical mass of involved stakeholders who are willing to make things happen. We recommend that NDC focus on projects and programs that increase activity in the historic core.

At the same time, downtown Nampa faces significant challenges. Beyond the challenging market conditions, which we discuss in the following section, the traffic pattern on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenues and the one-way couplet on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets create significant barriers to downtown development. In addition, several businesses have chosen to locate in the newer, multi-story office buildings near the intersection of Garrity Road and the I-84 Freeway, rather than in the downtown core.

## ***Current Market Conditions and the Potential for Private Development***

### ***1. Financing:***

While construction lending for commercial real estate projects is loosening up a bit (from a dead stop) it is flowing in a very selective manner to extremely well located projects in primary markets (e.g. NYC, Washington DC). Downtown Nampa is a highly unlikely location to attract capital in today's market climate, at least for the next twelve to eighteen months. This is a very real constraint on new development as well as major remodels. While creative financing may come into play, it will be an exception.

### ***2. Public/Private:***

Projects that might be pursued on a cooperative basis with private developers might have to wait in favor of other public infrastructure projects that the Nampa Development Corporation (NDC) could execute on its own with available funds. The focus should be to create or improve public areas for purposes of hosting or enabling events that would be held in the downtown core and attract potential interest from retail tenants. Community plazas and public gathering places, utility extensions and relocations, roadway and parking improvements, land assemblage and acquisition, to name a few options, could all be considered, as they will likely not be pursued or enabled by the private sector until market demand and availability of capital return.

### ***3. Private Development:***

Private development will not occur simply in response to financing becoming available again. There has to be good fundamental reasons to attract well capitalized retail businesses. A sustainable model for retail uses demand satisfactory, preferably superior, **visibility, access, traffic, market potential and zoning**.

NDC, along with merchants, landlords and planning staff can assess the downtown core for these five determinants and work to improve in each category. For instance, one way streets impede access and visibility by 50% and similarly dilute traffic. Access also includes consideration of pedestrian routes,



parking availability and proximity of uses to each other. Separating the future planned library and outdoor plaza(s) from the existing and distinctive retail area would likely negatively affect access.

Downtown Nampa's market potential might be explored further by a professionally prepared and executed market survey which can be made available to prospective tenants and landlords. Also, the CBD zoning code should be reviewed, by a panel including merchants, to determine if code changes might facilitate ease of mixed use development. Such things as signage restrictions, noise limits, food service requirements (grease traps, dumpster containment, ventilation), excessive and nonsensical fees either serve to attract or deter investment. We recommend that a market study would be undertaken in approximately one to two years.

#### **4. Focus on the Historic Core**

We believe that the market for development in downtown is far smaller than the current Downtown Plan anticipates. As a result, it is important not to dilute the demand. Efforts should be focused around the historic core where businesses are already beginning to see success. More activity in that area will lead to more success, and ultimately will lead to growth radiating out from the historic core.

### **Engage**

#### **1. Overview:**

Significant time and expense went into developing the Downtown Plan, beginning in 2004 through 2007. A major study was completed in 2007 that encompassed a 32 block area between the railroad and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenues. The plan may be too far reaching to have much practical application today. It is time to review the vision, build consensus, strengthen alliances and develop the resources needed to move ahead.

#### **2. Review the Vision**



Presently, responsibility for implementing the vision for Downtown Nampa is shared among a number of different entities: the NDC, the City, the downtown association, the private property owners and downtown businesses. A shared sense of dependency among these groups is needed to move ahead. Not one of these groups alone can realize the potential in the downtown. After several years from which the Downtown Master Plan was adopted and the changes that have happened in the intervening years, it is probably time to “check in” with these co-dependent

groups and review the vision. An outcome may be revisions or additions to the Master Plan and a greater sense of ownership in the direction for the future.

### **3. *Build Consensus***

Communication and consensus building is critical and might be broken down as follows:

- a. The conclusions and assumptions from the 2007 study appear to be no longer relevant in the current or near term market climate. For this study to be considered a viable planning tool, the City of Nampa will need to review all the components and determine to either salvage certain parts or set it aside entirely. Going forward, the City and NDC needs to ensure involvement from the active stakeholders. We recommend a summit with downtown businesses as a first step.
- b. Decide who or what organization will lead going forward.
- c. Re-focus on a smaller area. Take stock of what components of the downtown are successful, naturally occurring and self sustaining, and communicate effectively with those property owners and business owners. It is expected that this group will have its geographic center in the east, north-east quadrant of downtown.
- d. Once consensus is achieved in the core group, look inside and immediately adjacent to the core area for opportunity to add components, which may include or involve land swaps, public improvements and alliances with activity based venues.
- e. Consider other cultural input (such as the Hispanic community)

### **4. *Build Alliances***

A stronger tie needs to be made between downtown businesses, the Downtown Business Association and the NDC. The NDC should have a stake in the success of downtown businesses, the Downtown Association. While the role and responsibility of the NDC is limited to “brick and mortar”, there is a strong relationship between the built environment and activities. The first priority for the NDC should be in ensuring that the physical improvements supports and compliments the existing businesses and activities in the downtown. Examine what potential re-allocation of resources is possible. For example, are there brick and mortar needs that are currently being funded by the Downtown Association that urban renewal could fund, freeing the monies of the downtown association to fund events that the NDC cannot fund?

### **5. *Resources Are Needed***

Responsibility for the programs and activities suggested above will be primarily that of the Downtown Association. If the downtown is to increase the level of activities and programs, it must be someone’s job, and cannot be accomplished by part-time staff or volunteers. It is time for the downtown association to realize their potential needs the resources of paid professional staff.

The International Downtown Association (IDA) provides resources and champions vital downtowns world-wide. Attending just one of the national conferences of this organization would open up the eyes of the Downtown Association and the City to the creative and successful endeavors downtowns across the country are using in re-energizing their downtowns. This is also the competition. If the City is seeking investment, knowing what other cities are doing to entice that private development would be worthwhile. Either the NDC or the Downtown Association or both should become members of the IDA. For more information see: (<https://www.ida-downtown.org/eweb/>)



## *Energize*

### **1. Overview**

The key to attracting private development is in placemaking, creating a place where people want to go to and spend time. The existing historic core of the downtown is the heart of the community and is the catalyst for future private investment. Energizing this area with activities and people should be a priority for the City at this time.

### **2. Cultivate downtown uses and activities**

The key to downtown Nampa's success is increasing the amount of activity in the downtown. One way to increase the activity is to change the built environment by building libraries, parks, relocating city hall and so on. Changes in the built environment are important and ultimately necessary to transform Nampa's downtown, **but we think this is a long term solution.**



A strong downtown is not about buildings; it is about creating a place where people want to spend time. Nampa's Downtown needs more energy, activities and reasons for citizens and private investors to be there. This can be done with far less expense than buildings and infrastructure by cultivating the existing downtown uses and activities. **We recommend this as a first step.** At this point in time, focusing on programming activities is much more important than the construction of any

physical structures or improvements.

The historic core of the downtown is its greatest asset and strength. The contiguous blocks of historic structures have unity and a strong sense of place. This asset needs to be the focal point for the City's investments and activities. Too many of the current plans are pulling energy away from this historic core.

Our understanding is a number of quality new businesses have opened in Nampa in the last few years. Many of these businesses are still in the process of becoming established and profitable. It is critical for the NDC and the City to nurture the conditions that will allow these businesses to solidify, grow and thrive. This means that driving activity to the historic core of Nampa needs to be an immediate and high priority.

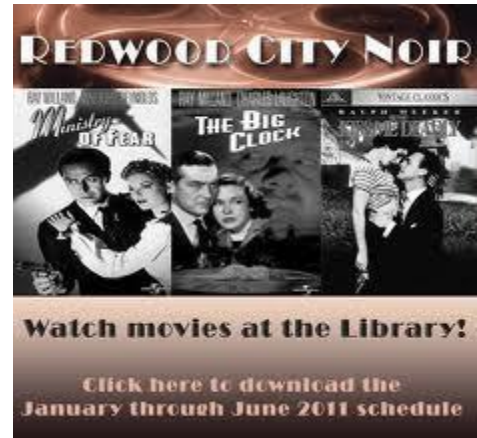
Good things are happening now but opportunities exist for more. We are impressed with the activities already taking place. The farmer's market and downtown music activities, among others, seem to be very successful in driving traffic to downtown businesses, especially during the summer. Other activities exist in downtown, including the public library and historical museum, but thus far these activities have had limited synergy with downtown businesses, and the historic core of the downtown. The current level of activity is a great start, but more is needed. The goal should be activities all the time and all year round. We also see opportunities for the full business community, the City and the NDC to become more complete partners in the success of downtown.

Ultimately, the activities that are developed need to be those supported by the stakeholders who will organize and use them. We have provided some ideas below, which seemed like good fits for Nampa, but ultimately, the community must decide. Our advice is simply for downtown businesses, the City and the NDC to think strategically about uses and activities that will attract all ages and demographics. That is, the City will need different activities to attract NNU students than to attract children and parents, teens, seniors, and so on.

### **3. *Library programming***

Nampa's public library is currently on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. We suggest bringing activities from the library to the street or appropriate indoor space (either an existing business or public space or a new, city-operated store-front or event space) closer to the historic core. These activities might include:

- a. Readings by local authors (e.g. Anthony Doerr)
- b. Free WiFi/study space
- c. Temporary, but recurring events on the sidewalk, on a closed street, or in the plaza/park. These could be related to reading or characters in books. Some possible examples:
  - i. Madhatter Tea Party
  - ii. Dragon story time with costumes.
  - iii. 'Library Jest Fest' for teenagers;
  - iv. Poetry slams;
  - v. 'Read the rails; ' i.e. fiction or non-fiction about railroads
- d. Collaborate with merchants on events. For example, Urban Shed could put on a garden book event, or Flying M could sponsor a poetry reading.



### **4. *Farmer's market ideas***

- a. Wine and beer tasting (engage Canyon County wineries, Bueno Cheapo Vino, local breweries)
- b. Explore potential patrons, i.e. what is not there that could be? Are there family activities that could be added to the farmer's market?
- c. Develop several special events during the season related to local food, hunger in the community, cultural food demonstrations, etc. Consider a Harvest Table dinner, using a long table down a closed street.

### **5. *History themed events***

- a. Offer a murder mystery dinner.
- b. Hold an old-time fiddling demonstration.
- c. Demonstrate home-made food (ice-cream, butter churning or cheese-making).
- d. Offer horse and carriage rides.
- e. Offer train rides, or stationary train tours.
- f. Model railroad displays.
- g. Develop native tribe displays or events.

- h. Display cruiser cars, other old car shows.
- i. Accommodate lectures (NNU, other colleges).

**6. *Music, arts, food, literature, crafts, outdoor activities, etc.***

- a. Create a downtown gift card visitors can use at any downtown business.
- b. Collaborate with NNU on serving events on the college campus. For example, if there is a play or basketball game on campus, include a handout with the tickets showing things to do in downtown Nampa before or after the event. Offer discounts to people with NNU tickets.
- c. Sponsor events with the Boys and Girls Club or YMCA.
- d. Renovate a City or NDC-owned or leased art gallery offering free space to local artists.
- e. Develop bike-themed events (Cafferty's).
- f. Offer arts and crafts events (Puffy Mondae's).
- g. Collaborate with NNU and others on events to bring students and faculty downtown. For example, have an NNU lecture at the Pix.
- h. Offer theatre, dance and indoor music (Pix Theatre Group).
- i. Expand Downtown Nampa Night and ensure events are located strategically.
- j. Invite non-competing outside businesses for events, e.g. hunting and fishing gear from Cabela's, backpacking or a portable climbing wall from Sierra Trading Post.
- k. Hold cooking competitions, e.g. beet soup, chili, lamb stew.
- l. High attraction public art, e.g. climbable art.

**7. *Keys to Successful Programming***

- a. Leadership. While a single strong leader may be successful, a triumvirate may be longer lasting. Find several leaders from key stakeholder groups and formalize their leadership and publicize the event.
- b. Engaged stakeholders. Stakeholders need to be engaged in a meaningful and productive way. Engage stakeholders in the design and decision-making process, including property owners, business owners, residents, civic leaders, business and professional associations, cultural and community groups, citizens and any others. This will ensure that the downtown has many supporters who will take on the many activities needed for long term success.
- c. Accessible and transparent decision making. Transparency will ensure that everyone knows what is going on and when. Develop a media plan with news and notification of all activities for all audiences (ex. create a website, Facebook page, Twitter account etc).
- d. Master implementation list. Create a project and activity chart with assigned roles, timelines—and regular communication between involved parties.
- e. Small, visible projects that set up quickly. Put some small projects on the ground quickly so everyone knows there is activity and momentum. These may be small, exploratory events or sandwich boards/ signs announcing events/projects to come.
- f. Celebrate history while looking to the future. When creating events and projects, design some that celebrate or commemorate the past, as well as others that are about living today and in the future.
- g. Celebrate success. With appropriate events and media, celebrate success and participants. Acknowledge past efforts as well.

## ***Maximize the Value of the Library Project***

### **1. Overview:**

The Nampa library represents the biggest, near-term opportunity to launch a revitalization of the Nampa Downtown area. Under the current design this project is intended to leverage off the Pivot Block bounded by 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> street, and by 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Under the current plan the library would be located on the south side of 3<sup>rd</sup> street between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, directly across from a proposed full city-block park and to the southwest of the Pivot Block.

It is the understanding of the ULI Idaho District Council that some of the money is available and allocated for the construction of a new downtown library facility. Given that a library has the opportunity to act as a draw for all types of city residents from young to old, and the fact that money is available, we agree that the library can and should act as a catalyst for downtown.

After a thorough review of the Nampa downtown we believe the key points with regard to the library are:

- a. Identify a **location** where the energy from the library facility can help focus activity and energy rather than disperse it.
- b. **Partner** with NNU and CWI to develop a joint library facility to increase patronage and reach out to a key younger demographic.
- c. **Design** the library facility to go beyond the basic services and include community-oriented services such as a coffee shop, community rooms, classes, etc.
- d. Look at the library as more than a physical building, but rather a **set of programs**, services and events that can coordinate with programming throughout downtown.
- e. Re-think the **strategy for library development**. Can the library grow to meet demand rather than over-building and waiting for demand to catch-up?

### **2. Location**

As stated earlier, Nampa's historic core is its greatest asset and strength. The contiguous blocks of historic structures have unity and a strong sense of place. Many of the businesses in this area seem to be struggling and would benefit greatly by an increase in the activity in the immediately surrounding area. The library offers Nampa a wonderful opportunity to give a real boost to this important area.

It is our belief that the library should be relocated to a parcel bordering on, or within, the historic downtown. This location will not only add energy and foot-traffic to this portion of downtown, but by focusing on a single area, it will help create a "critical mass" of activity that can be self-sustaining. Additionally, shifting the library away from the Pivot Block will avoid the traffic issues surrounding that block and enable the library to be more pedestrian-friendly.

### **3. Partnerships**

The City and Urban Renewal Agency have been working with local colleges (CWI and NNU) to combine efforts and develop a single downtown library that serves city residents as well as their students. ULI

Idaho believes that this is a very good approach to development of the library and should be done if at all possible.

Care and effort will be required to not only design a building that can work for all parties but also to ensure that the partnership created is viable, but if the City can join forces with either or both colleges, it is to the benefit of downtown. The addition of CWI and/or NNU will bring students to the downtown library, bringing young adult visitors in addition to children and older adults. This alone will help energize the immediate area and will provide customers for such ancillary services as coffee shops, restaurants and retail. Combining the location with the historic downtown will then enable the library to act as a draw, introducing the area to a broader base of potential visitors.

#### **4. Facility Design**

In addition to designing the library to serve both traditional City library visitors as well as students, efforts should be made to expand the definition of library beyond a repository for books to other ancillary services. Combining the library with such things as:

- a. Coffee shop
- b. Children/Teen areas
- c. Computer Center
- d. Meeting Rooms and/or Auditorium
- e. Outdoor patios, walkways, lawns and hardscape

All of these will help to improve the use of the library but more importantly to integrate the library facility itself into the fabric of the surrounding downtown. The library then can act as a gathering place for the community.

#### **5. Programming**

With the proper design and layout the library can become more than a building. The library can play host to events, programs and activities that give city residents a reason to come downtown. Everything from readings by authors to lectures by CWI/NNU professors to community events can occur in the same place. These events and activities should mesh with programming in the downtown area to provide a continual stream of activity downtown. In the end, it is important to look at the library as more than a building – it is the activities that occur within and around the building that are important.

#### **6. Development Strategy**

While the funds and the desire exist to build a library, it is worth considering alternative approaches to development of the library. Ultimately, the library is a set of activities and functions. These activities can occur in many different types of buildings. It is worth considering whether it makes sense to build a complete finished library for the future or instead downsizing initially with plans to grow into the full-sized library over time.

One approach is to take several of the existing buildings in the Historic Downtown area and connect them together into a single “library”. This approach could help absorb empty space in the downtown area, bring vital energy directly into this target area, and keep costs low initially until the City gets a better understanding

of the ultimate needs for both the library and for Downtown. As a side benefit, the converted buildings will maintain the historic feel, providing a very unique setting that will also act as a visitor draw.

The goal of this approach is to decouple the programming associated with the library from the physical building. By utilizing existing buildings for the new library the City can focus on the programming aspects and then later be able to design the ideal library based on the proven need/demand.

### *Create Engaging Open Space*



The current open space in downtown Nampa is lacking in programming and the result is that it is vastly underutilized. As with the library, to be a successful urban public space an appropriate and current program needs to be implemented.

The City of Nampa needs to examine the current downtown fabric and evaluate if the current location is the best site for the intended use. In order to properly evaluate the site opportunities, the City of Nampa needs to determine uses that will extend the use of the open space throughout the entire

year. Some of these uses might be: small public events, theatre and plays, activity and playground areas for children, spaces for relaxing or meeting friends, public markets, music festivals, art shows, and seasonal Nampa based cultural events.

The open space design may include: water features, paving, public art, seating, playground structures and equipment, and landscaping. Many local businesses such as bakeries, coffee shops, cafes and restaurants would directly benefit from the downtown pedestrian traffic. A public open space that includes appropriately designed amenities will persuade patrons to linger downtown and return more frequently.

Vibrant, active open space can serve as a catalyst for economic development of urban areas. In many cities across the country, parks and open spaces have spurred development and transformed neighborhoods. For the development community, this gathering of people leads to increase in property value and increases the opportunity to secure developers' future ability to build.

All successful public open spaces have one thing in common: strong leadership and community support. NDC will need to create a strong vision for their urban open space and work with the community to develop, design and program open space that is appropriate, and unique to the City of Nampa.



## ***Downtown Traffic and Circulation***

### **1. Overview:**

Traffic around the pivot block is a significant deterrent to development. Changes to the current traffic circulation should be a priority before development of the pivot block is seriously considered. The proposal to divert truck traffic away from downtown is critical to the success of the downtown. Nampa may want to collect additional information to refine the downtown plan, particularly with respect to traffic. Additional information on how much use of key arterials is “through” traffic as opposed to local circulation could help inform decisions. Further analysis of current and likely future use of the Garrity/11<sup>th</sup> route to downtown, the I-84 business loop and SH45 could help the City understand the potential impacts of proposed changes.

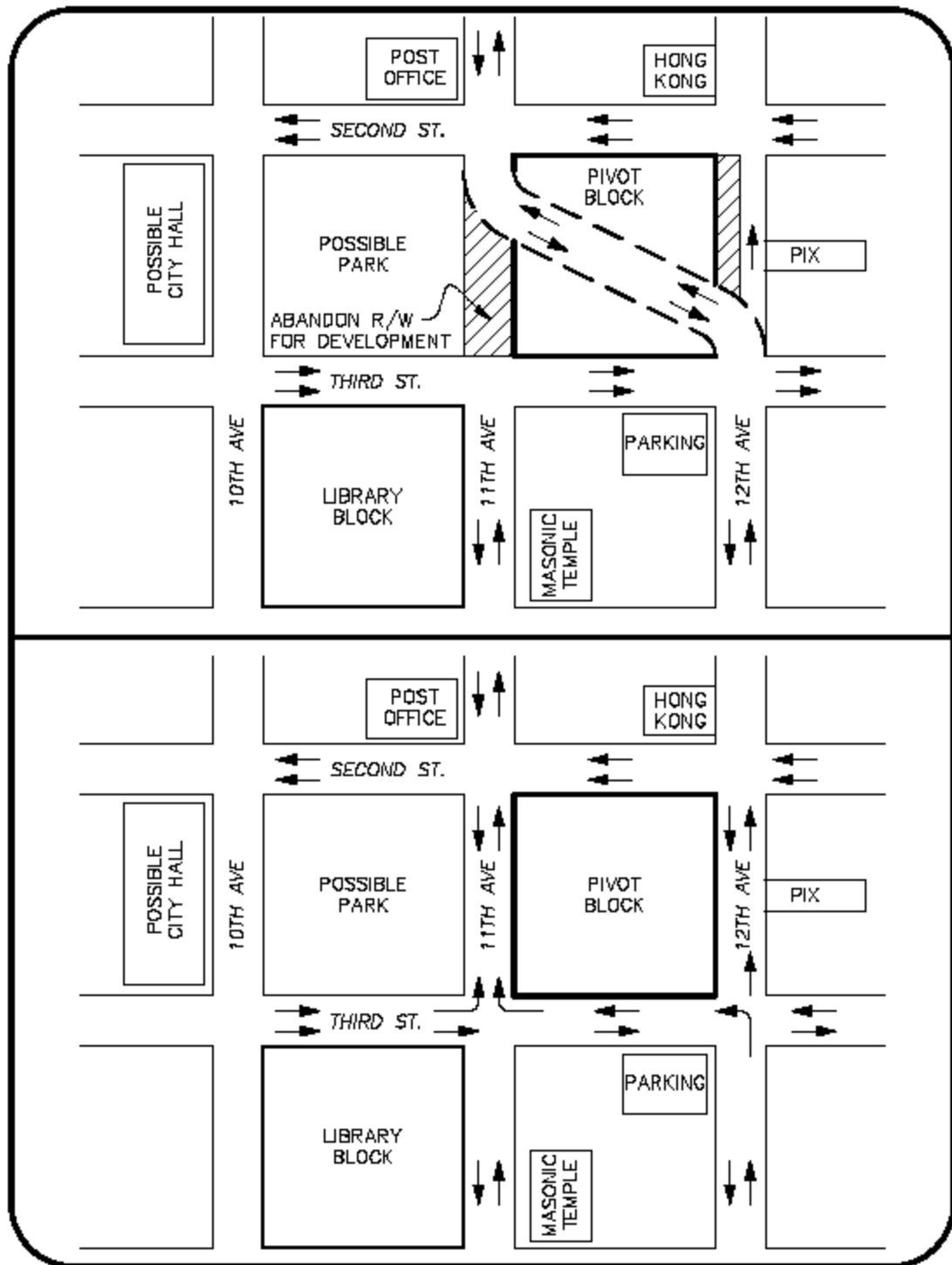
### **2. Pivot Block:**

Traffic around the pivot block is a deterrent to the kind of development the City envisions in their plan. Under the current street and traffic conditions, development of this site would be isolated from and have little relationship to its context. In addition, the intersections at 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 2<sup>nd</sup> St. are high accident locations. A development consistent with the City’s vision needs pedestrian connections, context and continuity with the surrounding downtown. These features are extremely difficult to achieve under the current street and traffic conditions. An isolated, stand alone development on this site would only detract from the pedestrian environment of the downtown and further contribute to the traffic conditions surrounding it.

To mitigate the current conditions and make development of the pivot block feasible, consistent with the city’s vision, we recommend two options for Nampa to evaluate further:

- Construct a street diagonally across the pivot block connecting 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. Vacate the adjacent segments of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> to allow the triangular remnant to be combined with parcels on adjacent blocks for additional development potential.
- Change 3<sup>rd</sup> Street between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets to a two-way segment to allow vehicles to travel both directions from 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> along the same route. The segment would logically continue as a two-way street to the east.

## Two options for circulation around the Pivot Block



### **3. *Truck Route:***

Nampa's concept of diverting truck traffic away from downtown, likely along Northside Boulevard and 7<sup>th</sup> Street to SH45, is an essential solution to minimizing the impacts of traffic in the downtown. One recommendation is to request that COMPASS run "a select link analysis" of the traffic on SH45. A select link analysis looks at a single point on a road system and provides general information about the origin and destinations of vehicles using the road. The results will provide Nampa with a general understanding of the use of SH45 and may help inform the City about the likely use of route alternatives. We recommend that a high priority be given to diverting truck traffic from the downtown.

### **4. *One-way 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Couplet***

We recommend further analysis of the use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> street couplet. COMPASS can conduct a select link model run to help Nampa understand the use of the couplet. The results can help Nampa get a general understanding of how much use of the couplet is by vehicles from the freeway versus local use. Higher speeds can be discouraged with signal timing that 'rewards' people who travel at or below the speed limit. This may improve the pedestrian experience with controlled speeds and platoons of vehicles that leave gaps for crossing the street. Additionally, one-way streets with reduced speed would reduce travel lanes versus a two-way street allowing for increased parking and may promote pedestrian safety.

If the volume of 'through' traffic associated with the I84 business loop is not high, Nampa could consider approaching the Idaho Transportation Department about shifting the business loop to a two-way street. Shifting to two-way streets may provide greater visibility and more access options for businesses on each street. Two-way signal progress is more difficult to achieve and may slow travel speeds during peak hours. In the heart of a downtown this may be desirable. Negative reactions from the public are more likely if the function of the streets is largely to get across town, in which case, shifting through traffic away from downtown by focusing on travel efficiency on a relatively close parallel route may be desirable. If 7<sup>th</sup> Street is improved for truck traffic this could become an alternative route for pass through traffic as well.

Nampa could also consider approaching ITD about abandoning the business loop. The business loop designation is a carry-over from the construction of the freeway and more effective way-finding signage could be created to promote access to downtown. ITD is likely to be interested in decreasing system mileage. The attraction of travelers from the freeway could be accomplished with good signage. A select link analysis could help Nampa determine the most frequent routes and general destination of trips into downtown from the freeway, which could help locate the most effective signage locations. Absorbing the operations and maintenance would increase Nampa's long term cost. This could perhaps be offset by the State contributing funds to the reconstruction of the truck route.

### **5. *Street Naming***

Nampa's street naming conventions are orderly and probably easily followed by residents. However when combined with the railroad, downtown Nampa's street names may be confusing to newcomers and visitors. Nampa can consider the relative importance of ease of travel to people unfamiliar with the City and possibly open a dialogue with residents about renaming some of the streets. An alternative progression of street names, for example using one topic in alphabetical order, (e.g. historical names) could replace the numbered system (likely the numbered streets either north or south of downtown).



## Recommendations

In summary, below is a list of recommendation we believe Nampa should explore, in no particular priority.

1. *Focus and create 'delightful' density* – Too many of the current plans are pulling energy away from this historic core. Nampa should focus on one, tight geographic area and make it welcoming and exciting.
2. *Leverage the historic core* - The contiguous blocks of historic structures provide a strong sense of place. This needs to be the focal point for the City's investments and activities.
3. *Engage all the stakeholders* – All stakeholders need to be engaged right from the start of any planning process.
4. *Energize downtown* - A strong downtown is not about buildings; it is about creating a place where people want to be. Downtown Nampa needs more energy, activities and reasons for citizens and private investors to be there. Enhance the downtown association and give them the resources to develop programs downtown.
5. *Library location* - The library should be relocated to a parcel bordering on, or within, the historic downtown. This location will add energy and foot-traffic to this portion of downtown, and help create a self- sustaining "critical mass" of activity.
6. *Library design* – A library should be much more than a repository for books. With the proper design and layout the library can be much more than a building. The library can play host to events, programs and activities that give city residents a reason to come downtown. Also, partnerships with the nearby colleges should be explored.
7. *Get the truck traffic out of downtown* – Downtown Nampa will never be a place people want to be as long as large trucks are rolling through. This traffic needs to be diverted away from the core.
8. *Slow the "through" traffic* – There still appears to be a lot of traffic travelling through downtown Nampa. This traffic need to be slowed or diverted away from the core.

## Where do we go from here?

ULI-Idaho is committed to helping Nampa take the necessary steps to improve and strengthen their downtown. We are excited by the long list of positive attributes Nampa has to build from, as well as the progress you have made thus far. Nampa is at a critical point on several decisions and we welcome an opportunity to be a non-biased, low-cost advisor as Nampa works its way through this very interesting period.