



Urban Land Institute

Sustainable Downtown Development In Idaho's Treasure Valley

Sustainable Development:

"How can cities and communities be shaped to meet present needs while empowering future generations to meet theirs."

ULI, *The City in 2050*

A Report prepared by a Task Force of ULI Idaho District Council Members with support from the cities of Boise, Eagle, Garden City, Meridian, Nampa and Star; the Meridian Development Corporation; and ULI Idaho District Council

May 2010

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 36,000 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 belong to the public and non-profit sector. Since inception 2004, the ULI Idaho District Council has organized close to 30 programs featuring experts and leaders in the field from throughout the nation.

Tapping into the diversity and breadth of the ULI Idaho membership, the District Council also provides community outreach in a number of other ways beyond programs. 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 teaching a class on real estate development in the BSU MBA program.

About the ULI Idaho Task Force on Sustainable Downtown Development

A. Background

In March 2009, ULI Idaho hosted a Mayor's Forum in which Treasure Valley Mayors articulated their visions for, as well as described the challenges to, creating sustainable Downtown development. In response to the challenges identified, ULI committed to bring together the necessary expertise, research and neutral, objective resources of ULI. In the fall of 2009, a Task Force was created of nineteen ULI Idaho members representing all aspects of the development and land use industry to respond to the Mayors. Financial support for the initiative was provided by six of the Treasure Valley cities and the Meridian Development Corporation. The Task Force met several times over the course of a six-month period, both as a whole and in individual teams. The pinnacle of the work was a one-day session of interviews conducted by the Task Force with 95 community leaders from the participating cities. Their input was invaluable in the formulation of the recommendations contained in this report.

B. Questions to be explored by the Task Force:

Based on the challenges articulated by the Mayors, the Task Force was asked to address each of the following questions:

1. What are the necessary tools and conditions to encourage and achieve sustainable and vibrant real estate projects in Treasure Valley Downtowns?
2. Who are the necessary partners to implement these projects successfully?
3. What are the obstacles to achieving these projects and how do you transform obstacles into opportunities?
4. What development strategies are realistic for Treasure Valley Downtowns and what specific steps should cities take to implement these strategies?
5. What project examples in Western cities could be emulated in Treasure Valley Downtowns?

C. The Community Interview Process

The goal of the ULI Task Force was to develop a consistent and integrated report whose recommendations represent its best professional judgment, are strictly objective, market-based, candid and implementable. To accomplish this goal, an intensive one-day session of interviews was conducted by members of the ULI Task Force at various locations throughout the Valley with 95 community leaders from the participating cities. Email invitations were sent out in advance and included general questions that were followed up in detail along with more specific questions for each of the 24 groups of 3-5 community participants. One hour was allocated for each group interview with 15 minutes between each interview. Task Force members were assigned as interview facilitators, time-keepers or scribes. At the end of the day, each Team was asked to summarize the five big issues/ideas resulting from the day's interviews. Appendix E lists the community participants in the interviews. Appendices F and G list the major themes and topics springing from the community interview process.

D. Study Conclusions and Report

After the community interview, subsequent meetings of the Task Force and teams were held to identify major issues and conclusions and to prepare a preliminary outline of the final report from which each Team would prepare a draft of their section. The entire Task Force then met on several occasions to review drafts of the final report focusing on consistency, effective integration of the various sections and feasibility of the recommendations prior to issuing the final document. This report builds upon previous ULI reports in defining direction for the Treasure Valley cities. ULI Idaho takes pride in contributing an additional report that supports the ULI Idaho mission and that will help Treasure Valley cities to achieve more sustainable Downtown development.

E. ULI Idaho Task Force Members

The four Task Force Teams and ULI Idaho members participating in this report were as follows:

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Original inspiration and organization for the Task Force was provided by former ULI Idaho Chair, **Frank Martin**. Frank, who has served on a number of ULI Advisory Panels nation- wide, formulated the original scope of work, recruited Task Force members and provided counsel and guidance through the process.

Special thanks go to the administrative assistants and city staff who provided support in arranging the interviews with community leaders. These individuals providing the keys to success include: **Amanda Brown** and **Tracy Hall**, Boise; **Elizabeth Connor**, Garden City; **Devri Roubidoux**, Eagle; **Peggy Gardner** and **Anna Canning**, Meridian; **Peggy Shaver** and **Beth Ineck**, Nampa; and **Delta James**, Star. The Task Force was also assisted and thanks the volunteers who assisted in recording the interviews: **Kelsey Nunez**, Givens Pursley and **Beth Ineck**, Nampa. Special thanks also to **Mary Barnes**, Givens Pursley, for making conference room, food arrangements and for general support; and **Geri Scroggum**, Legal Assistant to JoAnn Butler, Spink Butler, for her editing of this report.

Finally, the Task Force thanks the almost one hundred community leaders who committed their time and provided candid, thoughtful opinions during the interviews. The Task Force is extremely grateful for their involvement and applauds the many individuals who pay special attention to each of their community's Downtowns. The names of the individuals who participated appear at the end of the report in Appendix E.

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Preface

The Treasure Valley Mayors identified shaping sustainable Downtowns as a high priority in each of their communities. Why are Downtowns important? Downtowns are the historic souls of our communities; the links to the past and the greatest visible expression of any community: its values, its history, its economic success and its culture. Downtowns have been described as a community's living room: the place citizens take their visitors and the place where communities come together for celebrations, events and festivals. Downtowns are the essence of community in bringing people together.

Why are **sustainable** Downtowns important? As the core and center of cities, Downtowns already have the civic places that attract its citizens and the essential services needed to support development. The existing infrastructure in Downtowns can serve future development effectively, saving funds critical for cities' many civic functions. Existing structures can be re-used and re-generated for future uses without the often high private dollar expenditure needed for new construction. If Downtowns can be sustained, the pressure to build ever increasingly outward from the cities can be lessened, saving commuting costs, reducing petroleum consumption and reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. Finally, Downtowns provide the exciting opportunity for mixing uses: employment, retail, and housing and leisure activities. Downtowns create the environment that will meet the market demand for the increasing number of people looking for a more sustainable lifestyle.

Creating sustainable Downtowns does not happen in isolation; sustainable downtowns can occur only within the context of broader community sustainable development. Downtown revitalization and creation of a "sense of place" within Downtowns is just one, but an important component of an overall strategy for sustainability. The Treasure Valley cities should look at the full range of issues that contribute to sustainability if they want to achieve sustainable downtowns. The two are synergistic. For example, Downtown revitalization will **not** occur in an environment where some jurisdictions engage in sprawl. Until the counties and the cities get out of the sprawl development pattern, efforts to encourage more compact development, as in downtowns and other centers, will be undermined.

Each of the Treasure Valley Downtowns is unique and poses different challenges and opportunities for their elected officials. Boise and Nampa have historic Downtowns that have long served an area much larger than their city limits. Meridian, Eagle and Star have smaller Downtowns that were, until twenty years ago, farm to market centers. Garden City has never had a Downtown, but recognizes the critical value of a heart and center that a Downtown can provide for its community.

Addressing the unique challenges of the individual cities' Downtowns, while also extracting from the interviewees general principals applicable across the Valley, was difficult. The intent of the study has been to provide a range of findings and recommendations that have both generic application in all the cities and specific application in some but not all of the Downtowns. In whatever form, Downtown redevelopment is a sustainable solution in and of itself.

Throughout history, cities, and in particular Downtowns, have provided the world's greatest ideas, innovation and wealth. It is very fitting, then, that as we look to the future, these special places should provide the greatest opportunity for sustaining our world.

".. we will transmit this city...greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us"
Athenian Oath

I. Findings and Recommendations

A. Develop a Common Vision

A common vision must be collaboratively developed and clearly articulated. The key partners in each community need to understand and declare the importance of vibrant and sustainable Downtowns. In some cities, sustainable Downtown development may already exist as part of the vision in the comprehensive plan and just needs to be more broadly supported and effectively communicated.

1. **Build on existing or recent efforts at visioning and collaboration to gain broad-based community support.** The community's vision for revitalization and sustainability is the starting point. The public is uneasy about higher density and will be unlikely to accept individual developments that involve more compact development patterns. A broad community consensus is therefore needed to support sustainable downtown development.

Most Treasure Valley cities have engaged in community consensus as part of their Comprehensive Plan or downtown planning efforts. "Vision for the Valley" is the most recent example, but a long list of efforts is contained in Appendix H. These plans should be evaluated. Plans should be modified as needed to support a sustainable Downtown vision that includes compact development patterns and transportation options. Do these documents include a clear vision for a sustainable and vibrant Downtown supported by the entire community? A small, broad-based working group, including those individuals interviewed for this report, would be good to include as part of this discussion.

2. **Alignment of public and private vision, leadership and decision-making is critical to the creation and maintenance of sustainable Downtowns in each City.** Individual visions can be fragmented among all the various institutions and stakeholders in a Downtown. For the vision of a sustainable Downtown to become a reality, the vision needs to be clear and needs to be the combined vision of all the stakeholders.
3. **Create an effective and efficient mechanism for the sharing of visions, plans and priorities and resolving differences.** For example, each City could form a "Downtown Action" group (reminiscent of the "Uptown Boise" group of the 1980s) composed of key Downtown players, major employers, and constituents. This group must consist of governmental and private leaders with substantial influence and the ability to make decisions and make things happen. This should not be "just another committee" but an authoritative, take action, make decisions, get-things-done group; the "champions" for the downtown vision.

Specific responsibilities and actions of this group would be to:

- a. Discuss and identify individuals in the group that are capable and committed to assuming specific leadership roles;
- b. Share, coordinate, and support visions, strategic plans and priorities;
- c. Resolve differences;
- d. Drive consensus;
- e. Explore and forge strategic partnerships;
- f. Identify a few specific priority projects and jointly support and implement these priority projects;

**ACCOUNTABILITY FOR
MAKING IT HAPPEN**

Regina Saskatchewan
established a Downtown
Action Committee of all
government sectors, private
business and other
stakeholders that in a 2-year
period implemented 8
projects. The Downtown BID
acted as project manager,
created the action plan and
provided quarterly reports.

- g. Educate and update Downtown constituents and stakeholders;
- h. Ensure that visions, plans and priorities generate excitement and broad support;
- i. Hold elected officials accountable and provide political cover for tough decisions; and
- j. Monitor results and report to stakeholders through use of a report card developed by a trusted, neutral source, such as the universities.

Leadership will be the key to the success of a Downtown Action group. Key Downtown players in the private sector must be identified, recruited and encouraged to be part of the group and to step up to a leadership role. Any Downtown Action group should openly discuss and select individuals to lead the effort. Leadership should be broadly based.

4. **Build consensus through collaboration.** Develop a process to get public buy-in. Consider the use of charrettes or community cafes where the public is invited to provide input into shaping the Downtown vision. Community involvement in the development of the Meridian Ten Mile Plan and Boise's Harris Ranch Specific Area Plan are excellent examples to emulate. The key component is to do this early in the process as part of the formative meetings of the Downtown Action group. Partners such as COMPASS, ULI, Idaho Smart Growth, local business organizations and others potentially can be involved as conveners or facilitators.
5. **Create mechanisms for keeping information current.** Surprisingly, ULI discovered during the community interviews that many key leaders, who should know, were not aware of a city's vision for its Downtown. Even among departments within the same city, there was not a collective understanding of the city's goals for its Downtown and key documents and vision studies commissioned by a city were unknown to many within a city.
6. **City ambassadors, strategic partners or volunteers who are the "vision keepers" are needed.** Creation of a distinct slogan or catch phrase that communicates the city's vision is suggested. For example, in a lecture recently given by Rod Stevens, Principal, Spinnaker Strategies, Mr. Stevens posited that, as someone visiting Boise, he had no clear idea of the Downtown vision. There was no clear concise statement of vision that he, as an outsider, could grasp. "City of Trees" was not enough to convey the City's future. Meridian's recently developed "Destination Downtown" website is a great example of bringing together information and on-going communication about its Downtown. Each City could create an annual Downtown workshop to improve communications, track results and improve collaboration.
7. **Cities have the ability to create the physical characteristics to carry out the vision of sustainable development through planning, zoning and design.** Street design should above all provide for safe pedestrian mobility, and incorporate pedestrian friendly elements while maintaining connectivity for bicycle, mass transit and vehicular traffic. Designing a variety of street types will create opportunities for a wider variety of things to happen and a more memorable place. Pedestrian friendly elements should include such items as standards for streetscape, landscaping, and lighting.

New buildings and exterior renovations/remodels should honor each community's unique heritage and enhance the appearance, livability and sustainability ---and essentially pedestrian character --- of the Downtown.

Building designs, whether historic or contemporary, are encouraged to create their own identity and character as an appropriate contribution to the organized development of an attractively built environment. Creating an architectural theme or attempting to freeze time is not the intent. Design guidelines are not meant to halt progress or restrict a property owner's creativity, but rather to promote economic development and investment that ensures new buildings and remodels create their own identity and character, are visually aesthetic, and promote a quality architectural character, fit within the context of their surroundings and support a compact, livable, walkable Downtown that continues to develop and mature well over time.

Planning should reflect the vision for the Downtown and be included in each city's comprehensive plan. The planning for the Downtown should also be integrated with both regional planning and plans for neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown.

A Downtown master plan or Downtown plan is a prerequisite for a successful and sustainable Downtown. Whether an individual city is in the process of preparing a new Downtown plan, or is preparing to update a previously adopted plan, the following critical elements should be included in the process: existing conditions; infrastructure analysis; real estate market and demographic analysis; opportunities and constraints mapping with public involvement; visioning; strategic plan implementation; and a mechanism for monitoring progress.

A checklist of the design and planning guidelines for creating successful sustainable Downtowns is included in Appendix B. Appendix H includes a listing of existing Downtown plans in the Treasure Valley and Appendix I lists plans from other regions.

B. Nurture Residential Living

Housing is critical to a sustainable Downtown. Attracting downtown living requires jobs, cultural opportunities and a cool place where people want to live.

As the 2010 ULI *Housing in America: The Next Decade* reports, there are a number of factors that will change the historical pattern of housing in the future. This shift will be from traditional suburbs to town centers and Downtowns. The demographic reasons for these changes are:

- Married couples without children (including empty-nesters) will be the fastest-growing household type, followed closely by single person households.
- The aging Baby Boomer cohort (55-64 years old) is either staying put in their suburban homes or, if and when they can, selling them and moving closer to jobs and urban amenities.
- The Younger Boomers (46-54 years old) already have their suburban homes. Even if they want to buy a new one, and are able to sell their existing one, such a move does not add to the supply of suburban homes.
- The prime group of move up buyer for new suburban homes is Generation Xers (29-45 years old), a significantly smaller group. Their ability to sell their existing homes is constrained by today's market and many find themselves with homes that are "underwater." When they do move, there are already sufficient supplies of modestly priced suburban homes to move up to.
- Generation Y (10-29 years old), is larger than the baby boomer and is not yet ready to move to the traditional suburban cul-de-sacs.

The Housing in America report also indicates that the move toward more sustainable development has been gaining momentum with an indication that we will see less homeownership in the future and, in the short term, a need for additional multi-family rental housing. All of this is good news for communities that want to see housing in their Downtowns.

The current high cost and lack of financing for the relatively unproven Downtown housing product should not discourage cities from strategically planning for such housing. There are two very good resources in the recently released ULI Idaho/Idaho Smart Growth Report, *Quality In-fill Recommendations* and the CCDC's, *2007 Workforce Housing Task Force Report for Downtown Boise, Idaho* that outline needed actions to implement and encourage Downtown housing.

Cities need to know there will be opportunities for Downtown housing partnerships with the private sector. Evidence that the market is ready for change is evidenced by a number of large housing industry companies establishing "urban housing" departments within themselves. Lennar Homes, Pulte Homes and Toll Brothers have newly formed urban housing departments. These new departments won't take over the existing greenfield development these companies do. But, if they are hedging their bets, cities can be ready to help them place those bets.



The ULI Task Force offers the following observations and recommendations:

1. **Re-vitalize and protect close-in neighborhoods.** Most of the Treasure Valley Cities are fortunate to have residential neighborhoods adjacent and close to their Downtowns. This is a tremendous advantage for supporting Downtown businesses and employment and in maintaining sustainable lifestyles. A first priority should be to make sure these neighborhoods are protected, preserved and revitalized. The Boise Conservation Overlay District is one example of a tool cities can use to maintain these adjacent neighborhoods. It can also be beneficial to nurture neighborhood associations, especially when the focus is on positive improvements as compared to project opposition. Boise's Neighborhood Reinvestment Grant Program and ACHD's Neighborhood Enhancement Projects are good examples of how to empower residential neighborhoods to improve themselves. Also, encourage additional housing near downtown, "Downtown but not too Downtown" to increase residents within walking distance.
2. **Plan for a range of housing choices.** In the short term, there will be a need for more rental and multi-family housing. Review zoning and building codes to ensure that new and innovative housing products are allowed, such as smaller, single-family houses on small lots; live-work units; lofts; cottage housing; community housing and long-term hotel units. Advocate for simplification of the condominium subdivision laws. Cities will need to move quickly in response to changing market conditions. Every housing project in the downtown will be different, and cities must remain flexible in their approach to these unique projects.
3. **Prepare for when Downtown housing becomes more viable by creating a place now that people want to live.** Downtown housing will happen when there is a strong sense of place. The work that some of the cities are doing on street and sidewalk improvements, public spaces, and beautification are all tremendous efforts in this regard. Champion and support temporary and unique experiences on the public sidewalk and streets, such as farmers' markets, art fairs, street vendors and entertainment. Improve the use of and access to natural features in and near Downtown such as Caldwell's Indian Creek and Boise, Star and Eagle's access to their parks and the Boise River.
4. **Focus on livability issues.** Consider the inherent conflicts that exist in 24/7 Downtowns and put in place – in advance – noise, delivery, street vendor and garbage pick-up regulations that will minimize conflicts for future residents and create more livable downtown neighborhoods.
5. **Think long term about the generation needs of people living Downtown.** Some cities, such as Denver's LoDo Neighborhood, are finding that young couples who have lived in Downtown want to stay in Downtown when they start families. Consider the development – in advance – of parks, public spaces and schools within the Downtown as viable uses to support families with children lifestyles, and support public services such as daycare and after school programs within Downtown locations.

AUSTIN S.M.A.R.T.HOUSING™ (Safe, Mixed-income, Accessible, Reasonably-priced, Transit-oriented) policy initiative is designed to stimulate the production of affordable housing . Through the S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ policy, the City provides fee waivers and expedited development review, and advocacy for S.M.A.R.T. housing projects.

C. Most Important - Partnerships

The best short-term opportunities for successful, sustainable Downtown development involve public-private and civic (that is, public-public) partnerships because both the private and public sectors are restricted by a slack market and financing constraints. The risk profile for private projects has been amplified and communities need to play a part in reducing that risk. Developers will have less capital to deploy on new projects. Cities will need to look at their private and civic partnerships differently and take bold new actions to be successful in accomplishing their goals.

1. **Develop greater expertise, perspective and knowledge about the roles to be played by a variety of partners** including Chambers of Commerce, Downtown associations, neighborhood groups, non-profit foundations, economic development organizations, the development community, and the state and federal government in assisting with Downtown development.
 - a. Shared knowledge among Treasure Valley cities may be the most cost effective way to increase an individual city's knowledge and expertise. There are many success stories among the Treasure Valley Downtowns that are not well known outside a particular community. Share and listen; borrow the great ideas from others. Remember: imitation is the sincerest form of flattery! A suggestion is to use the Treasure Valley Partnership meeting as a forum for discussing the latest Downtown success story. Or consider an annual update of "what is happening in your Downtown" for public consumption.
 - b. In the Treasure Valley, we can be land-locked, both physically and intellectually. Communities in other parts of the country are adding jobs in this economy or revitalizing their urban cores. Visits, interviews, dialogue with other cities throughout the country – especially via the internet – can provide inspiration and learning. (People locally are still talking about what they learned from the Boise Chamber tour of Austin Texas in 2007.) Build a robust knowledge base among key partners such as the Chambers of Commerce, Downtown developers and the colleges and universities. BSU has set its sights on being a metropolitan research university of distinction. Tap into the intellectual resources of all our local higher education institutions (Boise State University, University of Idaho, Idaho State, Northwest Nazarene University, College of Western Idaho, College of Idaho and Treasure Valley Community College) for research on economic development and urban issues.
 - c. Cities need to become knowledgeable about partnerships and how to make them happen. Cities that do not have the expertise need to train their staff or obtain the services of experts who can help. In this new economy, public private partnerships are fundamental in implementing Downtown development. Many public-private partnership deals can be missed or badly made because public agencies do not understand real estate finance and consequently make unrealistic demands, or they react negatively to what they consider unfair windfall benefits to the developer. As Charlie Long summarized from a roundtable discussion at the ULI Spring 2010 meeting, to do partnerships that create value, developers and communities need to:
 - Make deals based on the real estate, not wishful thinking: Communities and developers need a valid mutual understanding of the real estate economics and of what the markets will actually support.

- Build trust and ownership: Who is involved in the partnership is as critical as what the project is. Developers and communities need to take the time to use the “open book” and to develop relationships of consistency and trust.
 - Do the hard work competently: Public private partnerships are complicated and require resilience and persistence to accomplish. They require a competent team on both sides of the table who take the time and effort to craft complex deals.
- d. The federal government is investing in many unique, high-impact projects nationally involving education, transit, clean-technology and healthcare. Our cities can seek a better understanding of these federal programs and learn how to better leverage the visions for our communities with investment dollars. Too often, we are isolated, think small or rely on an occasional earmark. Instead, we should actively find programs and ideas to help us reach higher and farther.

Examples of federal government assistance used in other communities include four projects that were awarded Smart Growth Implementation Assistance grants:

- In Louisville, Kentucky, the grant is aimed at creating compact centers and a sustainable urban pattern in low-density developments on the city’s fringe.
- In Las Cruces, New Mexico, the grant seeks to stimulate a depressed commercial corridor while preserving existing community services.
- In Montgomery County, Maryland, a new Climate Protection Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through land-use decisions is underway.
- In California, the State is developing a framework for helping municipalities determine strategies for implementing smart growth and sustainable practices.

In early 2009 the federal Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Transportation (DOT) announced a joint Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI). This partnership was established to guide the agencies’ efforts to improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options and lower transportation costs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined the initiative in mid-2009 to promote brown field cleanup and redevelopment as well as address the challenges of climate change. The SCI partnership has agreed on set of principles with the goal of supporting sustainability by working together to prioritize projects and to bring these principles of sustainability into their grant awards. COMPASS is actively pursuing a SCI grant for the State Street Corridor.

If the federal government is recognizing the need to cooperate and build sustainability principles into their missions, certainly we can do the same in the Treasure Valley. What gets built as we come out of the recession will reflect what we learned during the recession. Let’s hope that cooperation is one of the larger lessons learned.

The cities in the Valley need help in identifying the federal dollars that may be available. Could communities jointly fund a position for a person whose sole purpose would be to focus on available public and private grant sources and apply for targeted funding for reach of the Valley cities? Could COMPASS dedicate resources for this job?

ULI Idaho stands ready to organize an exploratory meeting with one or more of our congressional delegates, COMPASS, the Valley Mayors, local EPA, HUD and DOT representatives, and perhaps professional associations like the Idaho Association of Planners and Idaho Smart Growth who can help brainstorm ideas, develop proposals, and support requests made by the cities to the federal government.

2. **Prioritize public-private partnerships with our strongest local assets.** Hospitals, universities, state and federal agencies and legacy employers are best able to weather economic storms and have proven their long-term commitment to our communities. Many are evaluating and pursuing expansion, and can play a pivotal employment role in our Downtowns through bricks-and-mortar construction and as catalysts to ancillary development. It is a tragedy when institutions such as a main post office or a school district's administration offices leave a Downtown for the periphery of a city. It is a joy when an institution like Concordia University Law School sees the synergistic opportunities for locating in a downtown near the courts and other legal institutions.

PARTNERSHIP EXMAPLES

Tucson and the University of Arizona partnered on the *Bridges*, a 350-acre urban infill mixed use project on the old Tucson Airport site. 60 acres – U of A Bio Science Center; 108 acres – retail (private); 20 acres – Pima County riparian habitat and recreation / flood control; balance in housing and link from the main U of A campus to Downtown received \$60 million in TIGER funds.

Cities can play a significant role in supporting these institutions and legacy employers. Making sure these institutions understand how important they are to the life of the Downtown is a critical first step. Cities should define for them why they should care about their Downtown and what a sustainable Downtown means for them. Explore and understand their needs for future expansion and development. Strategically work together on future location decisions and infrastructure needs. For example, plan and execute a 1½ day session with these key partners. Listen to their needs regarding site selection, the barriers they face, and the kinds of incentives they are interested in. Identify a staff point-person in each city that is tasked with communicating with these key partners at least twice a year (more often depending on the situation, such as when comprehensive plans and ordinances are being updated). Cities should not just convey what their future plans are, but ask those partners what their future plans are and coordinate them. This same staff person should be involved and help guide these partners through the permitting process as they move forward with new projects.

All of the Treasure Valley cities should recognize that they do not have what many other major urban areas have – the oft-times unflattering concept of “inner city” schools. Cities in the Treasure Valley can claim stable, quality schools as one of their great local assets. The flight to the suburbs for families with school age children in many cities around the country has been based on the desire for better public schools. It is remarkable that the Treasure Valley does not have this issue and we can focus on other more manageable issues to encourage housing in Downtown.

Treasure Valley cities should collaborate with their respective school districts and convey to the districts what the cities have planned for their Downtowns. Involve the districts in that planning process so the districts can similarly plan – either for new schools or to prevent the closure of schools closer to Downtown.

3. **Cities cannot be a spectator.** Cities need to get in the game and prime the pump. Don't sit back -- play offense. Find ways to unlock new, expanded (or re-allocate) financial resources to help spur economic revitalization and opportunities. The challenge of limited local government financing is acknowledged, but there may never be a more appropriate time to sell or leverage under-utilized assets, reprioritize expenditures or seek outside grants for this purpose.

In these difficult economic times, public resources need to be – and can be – the impetus for ideas and opportunities. These resources can start with a small design or support of a consultant, the small rehab of an existing building or creation of a welcomed event. In these tough times, interestingly, those hard-earned dollars go farther.

Actively work to create new partnerships with newcomers to the city. Bring various city department heads (e.g., economic development, planning, public works, building, and legal) together with the mayor in an initial meeting with larger potential developers and employers. Give these newcomers an introduction to the present availability and location of public services, the comprehensive plan's current vision, some of the redevelopment tools the city can assist with and describe what potential hurdles there might be. Meridian has instituted such an initial meeting technique and it automatically established what both parties could offer in a working partnership. This exercise has the added advantage of fostering coordination and communication among city departments.

C. Focus and Prioritize

There are many studies and written plans on the shelves, and there are many good ideas, plans, and efforts underway. Immediate action is needed to focus and prioritize them. It is time to integrate the best ideas and implement. Tight focus and rigorous prioritization are needed to succeed in tough times.

1. **Identify the Assets.** Many “strengths” exist in the Treasure Valley Downtowns – existing uses, businesses and investments, development and redevelopment opportunities, infrastructure, and experienced and community-minded public and private sector leaders. These existing “strengths” should be specifically identified and capitalized upon in setting priorities. Caldwell is a great example of capturing a former liability, now an asset, in daylighting Indian Creek. From that single, simple idea that became the focus of Downtown, new re-investment and strong partnerships for the future have been realized.
2. **Overcome the challenges to implementation.** During the interview process, the Task Force observed several factors that contribute to the cities’ inability to get projects accomplished, including:



**Ribbon Cutting the City of
Caldwell’s Indian Creek Project**

- a. Attention was scattered among too many projects. Cities can be overcome by too many private agendas, pet projects and competing needs. Focus and prioritize. There is power in success on one good project that builds support for future actions. Don’t hide your efforts, make a splash in announcing success.
 - b. The ability to execute can be challenged by too much reliance on fragmented institutional knowledge and decision-making. Overcoming traditional mindsets and resentment between local public agencies inhibits the ability to execute. There is a need to develop practical and effective mechanisms for retaining and sharing knowledge, both within local governments, as well as within the Downtown community. Modification to processes, jurisdictional authorities and resources is also needed in the long term.
 - c. The ability to focus on one or two priorities is further challenged by the multiplicity of agencies and individual agendas. The success of Caldwell’s Indian Creek project is attributed to the ability of that city to collaborate with and marshal the efforts of 12 separate agencies and their separate studies to accomplish the project. That fragmentation starts in the departments within cities and continues with the overabundance of special purpose governments. Each local government needs to become the dynamic catalyst to facilitate working and overcoming the fragmentation.
3. **Make some relatively “small” things happen and reverse the malaise.** From a small project to expanded “soft” infrastructure (such as events, marketing, and community management), cities need to send a reinvigorated message in 2010 and 2011: “We’re alive and we’ll always be the soul of our communities.” The public is overwhelmed by headlines about the economy and retail closures, foreclosures and budget deficits. As public and private sector leaders, it is critical

to find ways to keep optimism, opportunity and energy in our Downtowns, to celebrate and build upon the positive. Find some small victories, even in these most difficult of times, that keep us moving forward (Boise's "Curb Cup" event highlighting the creativity of ordinary citizens performing on the street curbs is a great example), that keep us excited and help to create an ultimate foundation for momentum. We can't allow ourselves to slide downward on the slippery slope or to be completely on the sidelines during this recession.

4. **Cities need to have one success story and build on it.** The Downtown Action group (or similar collaborative group) could focus and prioritize its efforts to identify each community's best project in the making, set a schedule and make the right person(s) accountable to make that project happen.

Each city should consider the appointment of a Downtown development point person responsible for advancing a small handful of identified, specific projects (and do not take on a new project until one of the projects has been completed). The point person must have expertise, horsepower and focus to foster a "deal-making" culture. A "proxy partnership" with key private individuals on some doable projects that require leadership, skills and consensus building, backed by the city, can create direction, accountability and results.

Each city should identify areas where the City wants to direct new sustainable development in its Downtown and consider offering incentives and perhaps re-zoning of these areas in advance of development. The reader is directed to the several excellent recommendations found in the ULI Idaho/Idaho Smart Growth Report, *Quality Infill Recommendations* (see Appendix H.)

D. Execute and Follow Through

Creative and determined execution is key to success. To ensure that downtown projects get done, cities should coordinate their downtown development plans with their economic development efforts, ease regulations for priority projects, provide appropriate incentives and seek to expand responsible financing mechanisms.

1. **Drive demand.** Demand for Downtown development in the Treasure Valley is limited. Most people currently living in the Treasure Valley appear to prefer living in suburban locations. Many businesses have also chosen non-Downtown locations (for example, Silverstone and El Dorado). It will be challenging to change the preferences of the existing population.

One approach to change this dynamic is to recruit people and businesses to come into the Treasure Valley who want to live and work in an attractive Downtown. The Treasure Valley has many on-going business recruitment efforts. We propose that the Valley's economic development efforts be refocused to market each city's Downtown specifically to appropriate business prospects.

This idea will require several changes to current practices:

- The cities and economic development agencies will have to identify appropriate target industries and specific target employers for each Downtown. We strongly encourage that each Downtown establish a unique niche for itself, rather than competing with other Treasure Valley Downtowns;
- The cities will have to work together with economic development agencies to prepare effective marketing materials ; and
- The economic development agencies will have to shift some of their marketing emphasis to the types of employers who would be attracted to working and living in a Downtown.

We see this approach as a win-win. Treasure Valley cities each gain important allies to recruit businesses into their Downtowns and the economic development agencies have more assets to sell to potential businesses.

2. **Easing regulations for priority projects does not have to compromise quality.** Traditional zoning standards are typically more applicable to new or greenfield development and less effective in built environments such as Downtowns. Use of a Downtown master plan is an excellent tool for determining the unique and particular characteristics of a Downtown and for forming zoning that works for that area. A Downtown zone that is specifically tailored just to that Downtown area is a good approach. The City of Nampa, for example, has created three sub-zones within its Downtown to respond to the individual characteristics within the Downtown area. Many times the "non-conforming" structures are what give an area identity; zoning codes should not impede the existence of such uses. Downtown zoning can also define the mix of uses that are so desired.

Cities can inhibit Downtown development through the overuse of discretionary review processes such as conditional use and design review. If a good Downtown plan has been

adopted so the city has a firm direction for Downtown development, very specific zoning and design standards can be established to implement the plan. Cities should take the time to develop a thoughtful zoning ordinance anticipating the Downtown development issues. It is all too easy to put off the hard work and lump all Downtown projects into a future discretionary review.

Design is important, but the review process should be efficient. Efficiency is easier when the developer knows what is expected, which is easier with a detailed zoning ordinance. The more prescription, the less need for a discretionary review process and use of a design board, but prescriptive standards can also be an inhibitor to unique and creative design. How is this balance between design absolutes and flexibility created? The City of Caldwell responded to this dilemma by creating a prescriptive design process for small-scale projects, and a more discretionary design process for larger development.

Many communities hire or retain a consultant to conduct design review, similar to the use by cities of an outside engineer for their expertise. The use of a design professional should be considered by the Valley cities. Garden City has initiated a Design Committee of lay and expert individuals who meet informally with applicants before any application is submitted to the city. Garden City recognizes that the process of design is iterative and the city should be involved early before substantial time and money has been expended by an applicant.

When discretionary review is in order, overlapping conditional use, design and duplicative review by other special purpose agencies should be consolidated. Cities should also review their inter-governmental agreements with other public agencies to reduce the amount of review time. In these ways, the time and costs of permitting can be reduced.

Cities need to have a full understanding of the challenges of downtown development. They need to understand downtown markets, demand and costs so that they do not ask for products that the market does not demand. They need to continuously improve internal training, systems and data to reduce developer costs and shorten the timeframes for approvals. Effective feedback loops are needed so that problems can be identified and fixed.

3. **Provide appropriate incentives.** Incentives are an important element in creating sustainable downtowns. Building sustainable Downtowns requires incentives because Downtown development presents unique challenges in terms of cost, complexity and the limitations of the market. Downtown development is not on an even playing field with suburban development, and the disparities need to be leveled out if Downtowns are to flourish.

With that said, incentives are not, by themselves, the answer to the challenges of Downtown development. The National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education has reported that economic incentives, alone, have not been enough to channel growth into Downtown or infill priority areas. All things being equal, if there are not disincentives to develop greenfields, the Downtown and other infill areas may be the priority for the Treasure Valley cities but these areas may become a second thought for much of the private sector.

Bringing the private sector into the picture to achieve the most successful, sustainable Downtowns, appears to occur when a city uses education, partnerships and regulations as well as incentives. Sticks **and** carrots.

Some incentives that may mean the world to a developer or property owner may not cost a city a thing. The Task Force and the interviewees identified a number of what they called incentives, most of which are not, as we might commonly believe, monetary in nature, and all of which are true to the root for the word “incentive” -- setting the tone and stimulating the result. These incentives fall in several categories as outlined below:

a. Facilitate Downtown entitlements

- Develop implementing ordinances, standards and flexible design guidelines that are consistent with the adopted plan.
- Reduce entitlement risk by undertaking city-sponsored rezoning of property in Downtown, establishing, for example, minimum residential densities.
- Simplify the platting process with utilities and other special purpose districts. Remove duplicate platting approvals.
- Monitor performance and adjust plan and regulations as needed.
- Develop prototype development plans and designs.
- Develop institutional capacity by adding key, trained staff.
- Designate specific staff members as project managers for Downtown and insist that part of the job description is active collaboration with various partners. Downtowns that are proactively managed by a mayor’s office, planning department, or a redevelopment agency will be most successful. Don’t limit management to the public sector. A large-scale private developer can take on this role as well.
- Accelerate the development review process - require only administrative design review approval for a development application consistent with the plan and guidelines. Normal public hearing process would be required if an application deviates from the plan and guidelines.
- Allow a lower transportation level of service for Downtown.
- In Ada County, transfer jurisdiction of roadways in Downtowns from ACHD to cities and execute inter-local agreements regarding tax revenue, impact fees and maintenance as required. There is precedent for this with ITD transferring control over certain state highway segments in urban areas to ACHD.

b. Provide financial incentives

- Waive impact fees for Downtown (this action may require reassessing impact fees to other areas to meet the adopted capital improvements plan). If fees are not waived entirely, implement a reduced fee structure and/or defer payment until occupancy.
- Obtain approval of other local government entities to waive, reduce or defer fees for Downtown through inter-local agreements.

- Remove impediments to development related to construction staging, such as fees for lane closures or temporary removal of parking meters.
- Consider waiving other fees, including building permit fees, plan review fees, hook-up fees and system charges.
- Consider support for implementing legislation for tax abatement for Downtown development.

c. Prepare Downtown land for development

- Create a GIS database of properties in Downtown for redevelopment and update regularly.
- Assemble land for redevelopment in Downtown and adjust parcel lines that constrain use conversion.
- Failure to investigate and, if necessary, cleanup brownfield sites can be more costly in the long-run. Obtain grants for site investigation and remediation.

d. Improve Downtown infrastructure

- Undertake infrastructure investment in Downtown to upgrade, replace or extend infrastructure to support desired uses. Coordinate with other utility providers.
- Develop a catalyst public project, such as a park, library, community facility, or parking, which can be leveraged to attract additional private investment. Prioritize and focus on what might be considered “loss leaders” that serve the entire Downtown.
- Continue an emphasis on making the sidewalks a well-landscaped place of their own that allow for pedestrians as well as seating areas, restaurant locales, WiFi service, bicycle racks, and even public bathrooms.
- Understand what tools are available for Downtown infrastructure improvement. Collectively invite a consultant versed in infrastructure finance to speak to the Treasure Valley cities about how to use the tools we already have in place in Idaho.

Other incentives learned from other downtowns are listed in Appendix D.

4. **Expand responsible financing mechanisms.** Idaho does not have adequate funding mechanisms to support Downtown development. The existing mechanisms, which include cash, general obligation bonds, serial tax levies, local improvement districts, community infrastructure districts, business improvement districts, and revenue allocation districts (otherwise known as tax increment financing or TIF), each have significant shortcomings that limit their applicability to Downtown development.

We recommend the exploration of several alternatives that could facilitate Downtown development. These include:

- Local option sales tax;
- Expanded timeframes for serial levies;
- Enhancement of the community infrastructure district statute to specifically support Downtown development; and
- Overall review of Idaho local government structure.

A more detailed discussion of these funding mechanisms, problems with these mechanisms and options for improving them are discussed in Appendix C.

In addition, the Task Force recommends that, in each city, an independent, private-sector led advocacy voice be created for these financing mechanisms. We believe that strong, locally-based, private-sector advocates with concrete needs and plans will add a powerful voice in support of increased financing options.

5. **Learn from successful examples right here in the Valley.** The Treasure Valley has had several good examples of how to successfully execute sustainable Downtown development. For example:

Boise State University – The University has been able to expand its campus substantially, even in these tough economic times. In Summer 2009, construction was completed on the Norco Building, home to the Department of Nursing and University Health Services (~81,000 square feet) (S.F.). Construction is currently under way on the Environmental Sciences and Economic Development Building with a completion date of fall 2010 (~97,000 S.F.). Construction plans are complete for the new Business and Economics Building (~110,000 S.F.). Significant public-private partnerships were involved in all of these projects.

Caldwell - Over the past six years, the City of Caldwell and Caldwell's urban renewal agency have worked towards a long-range vision to revitalize the City's center. The City's first implementation of that vision was to open Indian Creek, creating a one-half mile long, 120-foot wide greenway through the city center. Oppenheimer development was selected to develop phase one of the Downtown Caldwell Catalyst Project, Treasure Valley Community College, consisting of a 3-story (140,000 S.F.) LEED Gold building design. The City also commissioned Oppenheimer to produce a comprehensive master plan to foster responsibility and plan development in the Downtown core. The plan includes: a civic mall complex with retail shops, restaurants, TVCC, new city hall, public auditorium, and public plaza; a cultural center with a large central plaza, winery and viticulture area, restaurants, shops and an entertainment complex; and an Old Town Area with mixed use retail, professional offices, restaurants and housing.

Garden City – With strong leadership from the Mayor and City Council, Garden City developed an easy to understand comprehensive plan that was quickly adopted. The community was deeply involved in developing this plan. The comprehensive plan includes an implementation plan complete with priority actions, schedules and a list of responsibilities. While there are many more actions to be completed, the comprehensive plan has not only been developed, it has been implemented through new development codes and because of the leadership by the Mayor and Council and meaningful community involvement.

Nampa – The City and Nampa Development Corporation have worked closely over the last four years to strategically invest in Downtown revitalization to promote a healthy business district. During this time over \$8 million has been invested Downtown. Much of this funding has gone toward land acquisition for the new Public Safety Building, and parking lots. Additional projects being seriously considered in Downtown Nampa include: construction of a new library; reconfiguration of traffic routes into and out of Downtown; and the redevelopment of Lloyd Square as a new community gathering place for the Farmers Market and Downtown events. The City continues to work successfully with Downtown property owners to restore historic buildings to their original character through grants for façade improvements. The City has also invested in the development of a new streetscape plan for the Downtown to promote additional commerce and pedestrian amenities.

Meridian – Through the support of the Meridian Development Corporation, the city developed “Destination Downtown”, a visioning and community engagement program for the downtown. The program is on-going with an interactive website and a specific work program of implementation.

II. Appendices

A. Market Conditions and Potential

Each city should commit to an on-going analysis of the market potential for its downtown. Typically, developers provide market research studies to support their project proposals, placing cities in a responsive role. In the current down market, we recommend that cities get out ahead of the next development cycle and determine the market potential of their downtowns to substantiate their community vision. Opportunities will be different and unequal in scale and uses for each of the Treasure Valley cities reflecting the community location and competitive advantages. Cities should not be swayed by images from elsewhere, and simply adopt plans based on wishful thinking, but should be realistic in evaluating the assets that make them unique. Each city should understand the drivers for retail and other commercial uses and for housing in its downtown. With that understanding, each city will be better positioned to define the opportunity for private sector investment.

An additional imperative is that cities should resist approving greenfield commercial developments that would provide negative competition to their downtowns. A strong understanding of the market consequences from the research recommended above will provide the best justification for policy makers to maintain focus on the downtown.

As an overview of current market conditions (2009-2010) in the Treasure Valley, the task force obtained the following information from Colliers International, *2009 Year End Real Estate Market Review*, and Thornton Oliver Keller, *Market Watch 2009*. This is a reflection of the market at one point in time. Cities are encouraged to watch the market on an on-going basis, subscribe to the various local, regional and national reports that are available and continuously assess the importance of the information for their community.

1. **Office Market.** Office vacancy has increased significantly throughout the Treasure Valley from 11.7% in late 2008 to 18% in the 2009 fourth quarter.

Downtown Boise represents a significant portion of office space in Boise. The Boise Downtown office market has nearly 5.6 million S.F. of office space, accounting for 35% of the entire Boise office-market and over 25% of the entire Treasure Valley office market. Downtown Boise remains strong and below the market average vacancy rate (15.7% Valleywide) with a vacancy rate at the end of 2009 between 8.6% and 12%.

Although Downtown Boise did see negative absorption in 2009 for the first time (-150,000 S.F.), absorption has stabilized in early 2010. Boise Downtown rents have remained more stable than in other Valley Cities. Class A asking rents in Downtown Boise are currently \$18.75 per S.F., while they have fallen to \$16.50 per S.F. in other Valley Cities. The gap between asking and actual rents is also lower in Downtown Boise. Other Valley Cities see an average discount of 9%, while Boise Downtown's discount averages only 6%. Downtown Boise (\$18.75) and South Meridian (\$18.50) are the two areas with the highest Class A asking rates. Eagle, which once saw rents in the \$20 range, has seen the average plummet to \$15.50.

Downtown Nampa has some of the most affordable lease rates in the Nampa market. With vacancy increasing due to tenants moving out to newer space across town, building owners have had to become aggressive with their leasing strategies, offering low rates and short lease

terms. Planned re-development projects of the city are key in bringing life into the Downtown and reversing these trends.

2. **Retail Market.** The closure of Macy's in Downtown Boise and Sam's Club in Nampa contributed to a rise in retail vacancy, increasing from 13.1% at the end of 2009 to 13.9% in the first quarter of 2010. Vacancy is expected to surpass 14% in the coming months.

Absorption is projected to be negative again this year, but should still be an improvement from 2009, which saw -362,000 S.F. of absorption. At the end of the year, Meridian and Eagle are the only two cities with positive absorption.

Asking rates have declined from a peak of \$17.50 in 2007 down to \$14.50 currently. Rents in Eagle are below average at \$14 per S.F., while Meridian is above average at \$16.00. Any increase in lease rates is at least a couple of years away and rents may decline further until more space is filled.

Boise's Downtown retail market is not as significant as its office market, representing less than 10% of all Boise retail space and 5% of the entire Treasure Valley's retail space. The Boise Downtown market experienced negative absorption in 2009, but far less than most of the Treasure Valley Cities. Downtown absorption was -17,000 S.F., while the Boise MSA had absorption of -362,000 S.F.. Retail vacancy had remained in the 12% range in Downtown Boise, until the recent closing of Macy's. This closure has caused a significant spike in Downtown retail vacancy, currently at 23%. The Treasure Valley market average is 14.3%.

3. **Short Term Market Potential.** Unfortunately, we cannot avoid the reality of banks not lending and other downward trends affecting how all new projects are viewed. We are being challenged with unprecedented market dynamics. Commercial construction is at an all time low, and housing is not far behind. Further, rents are not supporting new construction. Large equity sources are gathering, but there really is no trend in movement toward execution, other than REITs fixing their balance sheets via stock sales and new CMBS loans. The development, finance and brokerage communities are gauging what might become new parameters for supporting project feasibility.

From a retail standpoint, cities should focus on protecting and preserving the retailers that are in operation. Rent relief and other subsidies should be considered. Careful attention to operating budgets...appeal property taxes, watch utility consumption and be careful with maintenance expenditures.

Promote, promote, promote. People shop bricks and mortar for something to do. Events like weekend markets, coupons, gift certificate programs, car shows etc. Be careful not to block access. Seek out and take merchants' input seriously. If what the six cities consider downtown has a retail fabric to it at all, today, get creative and keep it from scaling back in these tough times.

While we work through this slump, be mindful of where you want to go with the long term goals. Developer's mantra: "Make your plan and work your plan" and "Things only happen if you make them happen."

4. Long Term Market Potential by Cities.

From the extensive interview sessions and the experience of the task force members, several unique long term initiatives for each city have been identified that over time will further promote sustainable and vibrant downtowns.

a. Boise

- Transit/Rail – potential to connect BSU and beyond
- Education - BSU Expansion - Research Facility and Lab
- Athletic Complex – professional baseball, multi-sport complex
- Convention Center and Jack’s Urban Market Place (JUMP adding synergism to the Pioneer Corridor
- SE Boise – Harris Ranch/extension of ParkCenter to Warm Springs
- 30th Street Specific Area Plan

b. Meridian

- Downtown- revitalization of Downtown Meridian
- Medical – development of The Core (Health & Science corridor)
- Education - ISU expansion – medical school and research lab
- Athletic Complex – professional baseball, multi-sport complex

c. Garden City

- Fairgrounds Site – potential for a downtown for the City
- Expand the 36th Street Waterfront District

d. Eagle

- Downtown- potential for redevelopment and expansion of Downtown core for mixed use
- Eagle-Star Technology Corridor (ESTECH) – project to attract technology tenants to the Eagle-Star corridor along Highway 44.
- Create opportunities for more density

e. Star

- Downtown – trying to determine “what is Downtown?”
- ESTECH – project to attract technology tenants to the Eagle-Star corridor

B. Planning and Design Guidelines for Sustainable Downtowns

1. The attributes of a successful sustainable Downtown include the following components:

- A strong ‘sense of place’ reflective of the community’s own identity, history, culture, geology, and eco-system —a place so rich and loved that people want to stay living, working and having fun in it.
- The focus of the city’s government and cultural spaces and places, attracting citizens city-wide, and sized for the whole city’s population, while providing comfortable spaces scaled for Downtown dwellers. These places are given ‘pride of place’ within the Downtown and are surrounded by synergistic retail and entertainment benefitting from the visitors to government and culture
- A ‘people place’, designed for people on foot, with ‘shoulder to shoulder buildings’, lively, transparent building facades fronted by broad sidewalks for meeting, eating, and greeting people.
- Places that ‘set the stage’ for a wide variety of community-wide, age diverse public activities and events, and enable easy pedestrian access to Downtown businesses.
- Supportive locations for ‘third places’ (after home and work/school) – cafes and pubs where people (including youth) can gather, inside and out, to meet, do business and relax together.
- Parks, plazas and green spaces for socializing, playing and exercising pets.
- Full of lovable objects—especially public and private art, sidewalk furniture, paving, pavilions, kiosks, stages and other places for people to act out their public lives.
- A caring place where people and city government are compelled to act compassionately and protectively of the places, people, and things within it.
- A distinct and unique mix of shopping and entertainment concentrated tightly together to create a walkable, vibrant intensity—with entrances and storefronts that are closely spaced, transparent and welcoming—and with signage that is people- scaled and oriented.
- A diversity of service, commercial and office business building sizes - recognizing appropriate locations for different types so businesses can grow and change while staying in Downtown.
- Office entrances are designed to facilitate casual and business conversation and to support segue to adjacent retail and restaurants.
- A comfortable, safe, interesting place to live for a diversity of ages, income family sizes--providing daily needs in a walkable area (1/4 mile radius) for both people and pets so people will come to stay over the course of their changing lifestyles and household sizes.

- Safe, vibrant schools and universities with interactive student, faculty and research collaborations with government, business and culture in order to grow educated, highly-trained passionate people that sustain a growing economy.
- ‘Green infrastructure’ that respects and supports open natural drainage, habitat corridors for fish, bird and urban animals.
- Easy and safe ways to get into, around, and within, whether on foot, bicycle, car, or transit--- providing comfortable, easily accessible vehicle and bike parking, and transit services.
- Streets for vehicles are calmed and as narrow as possible for easy pedestrian crossing; Parking is in the rear of buildings or in parking structures with pedestrian entrances that are safe, visible and located to enhance adjacent retail/restaurant activity.
- Easily connected to other city neighborhoods and other cities by foot, bike, car and transit in order to easily entice people to visit and share ideas.
- Durable, efficient, and easily serviced while flexible—allowing for future changes in uses; infrastructure and buildings are energy efficient using renewable sources, materials are recyclable and non-toxic, waste is minimized or recycled, water is conserved and reused, air is clean; citizens are encouraged and empowered to invent, take care of, and love Downtown.
- Healthy food is produced in and nearby, on the ground or on the buildings, and shared with those in need.
- Wireless communication is throughout to facilitate business and social communication.
- The city prioritizes and incentivizes Downtown business retention and development, public events and activities.

2. Cities have the ability to create the physical characteristics for successful sustainable development through planning, zoning and design.

Street design should, above all, provide for safe pedestrian mobility, and incorporate pedestrian-friendly elements while maintaining connectivity for bicycle, mass transit and vehicular traffic. Designing a variety of street types will create opportunities for a wider variety of things to happen and a more memorable place. Pedestrian friendly elements should include such items as standards for streetscape, landscaping, and lighting.

New buildings and exterior renovations/remodels should honor each community’s unique heritage and enhance the appearance, livability and sustainability ---and essentially pedestrian character --- of the Downtown.

Building designs, whether historic or contemporary, are encouraged to create their own identity and character as an appropriate contribution to the organized development of an attractively built environment. Creating an architectural theme or attempting to freeze time is not the intent. Design guidelines are not meant to halt progress or restrict a property owner’s creativity, but rather to promote economic development and investment that ensures new buildings and

remodels create their own identity and character, are visually aesthetic and promote a quality architectural character, fit within the context of their surroundings and support a compact, livable, walkable Downtown that continues to develop and mature well over time.

Planning should reflect the vision for the Downtown and be included in each city's comprehensive plan. The planning for the Downtown should also be integrated with both regional planning and plans for neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown.

A Downtown master plan or Downtown plan is a prerequisite for a successful and sustainable Downtown. Whether an individual city is in the process of preparing a new Downtown plan, or is preparing to update a previously adopted plan, the following critical elements should be included in the process: existing conditions; infrastructure analysis; real estate market and demographic analysis; opportunities and constraints mapping with public involvement; visioning; strategic plan implementation; and a mechanism for monitoring progress.

a. Guiding Principles for Street Design

- **Dimensional Standards**-dimensional standards should be based on types of current and anticipated traffic-pedestrian, bicycle, mass transit. One-way street design should be discouraged.
- **Traffic Calming**-in higher-density locations traffic calming devices should be integrated in the street design to provide increased pedestrian and bicycle safety. Traffic calming elements should be integrated into the overall streetscape design standards.
- **Landscaping**-street trees and landscape buffers need to be included within overall design standards. Street tree design needs to have standards based on spacing to provide shading for pedestrian traffic. Tree species and varieties need to be selected based on low maintenance and appropriateness for climatic location.
- **Lighting Design**-lighting needs to be integrated within the overall streetscape standards. Lighting design standards need to consider types of traffic that will use street, appropriate scale to human scale, and historical correctness, and or specific neighborhood design qualities.
- **Streetscape Zones**-Overall street design needs to provide for specific zones to incorporate street furnishing, pedestrian and commerce.
 - Street furnishings (benches, landscape containers, garbage and recycling containers) need to be provided in groupings that provide the pedestrian comfortable distances to walk but with provisions for resting, shopping, and socializing.
 - Pedestrian zones need to be established that provide a safe area for walking, including for persons with limited mobility, young children and persons with strollers.
 - Commerce zones-the width of the sidewalk needs to take into consideration opportunities for outdoor seating for events, restaurants and other commercial activity.

b. Guiding Principles for Building Design. Key elements of Downtown building design guidelines should include:

- Building height and articulated facades that create a sense of street enclosure at a human and pedestrian scale.
- Building designs that are contextually appropriate in terms of scale, mass and form, use of materials, textures, colors, architectural elements and details to ensure a compatible and aesthetic contribution to the Downtown fabric.
- The use of fundamental design principles of composition, order, balance, rhythm, repetition, and proportion.
- Encouraging vertically integrated and/or horizontal mixed-use forms for more compact Downtown development.
- Sustainable, 'green' design principles – re-use of buildings and parts, energy efficient using renewable energy, water re-use and conservation, non-toxic, recyclable and local materials, low impact stormwater strategies such as permeable paving and green roofs, and low emissive paving and roofing. (See www.usgbc.org for additional resources)

c. Guiding Principles for Building Orientation:

- Buildings should be oriented to face the street with primary consideration given to the visual impact from the perspective of the pedestrian or driver. On-grade parking should be located at the rear of a building screened from the street, and not encouraged on major street frontages in the Downtown.
- Structured parking should be designed as integrated structures compatible with surrounding structures and incorporate mixed-use activities at grade to activate the street. Parking structure vehicle entrances should be incorporated with alley systems if possible.
- Pedestrian entrances/exits should be transparent and occur at street level (not at upper levels) to enhance street life.

d. Guiding Principles for Building Placement/Setback:

- Except for recessed entries, alcoves, plazas, pedestrian access ways, existing buildings lawfully created, restricting legal conditions (i.e. public utility easements, etc.) and similar features, buildings should maintain a zero front and side yard setback from the sidewalk or property line along street frontages. For commercial and mixed-use buildings, the zero setbacks should be met along no less than 50% of a building's front elevation. For civic buildings (for example, courthouse, city hall, library, museums) the zero setback should not be required, provided that a plaza or public square fills the space between the building and the street, allowing civic buildings 'pride of place'.
- Ensure that the ground floor of the primary street façade is distinguished from the upper floors and that there is the sense of interaction between activities in the building

and activities on the sidewalk. Create storefronts and entries that are visible (transparent) and easily accessible from the street. Mirror glass and highly tinted glass should not be used at sidewalk level.

e. Guiding Principles for Building Height/Form

- Buildings should reflect the sensitive use of proportion and scale, compatibility in height, mass and form to establish appropriate physical and visual relationships with adjacent and surrounding developments.
- Designs should address all sides of the building.
- It is not necessary that new buildings mimic any other building in their form and detailing.
- Building height should be a minimum of two-stories to develop a sense of street enclosure. A fourth story, and/or any portion of the building exceeding 40' in height shall step back at least 6' from the outer plane of the building unless increased through the design review process.
- Building facades facing public spaces, roadways and pedestrian environments should incorporate façade modulations, including appropriately proportioned projections, recesses and step-backs that articulate wall planes and break up building masses.
- Buildings should provide a base from the ground to the second story with changes in plane or material to convey a sense of strength and pedestrian interest.
- Low and mid-rise buildings are encouraged to use tri-part façade designs consisting of a “base”, “middle”, “top” concept defined by color, texture and materials. Use horizontal and vertical divisions in wall planes to organize window placement. The tops of high-rise buildings should be articulated to contribute to an interesting skyline.
- Emphasize the pedestrian scale at ground level/lower stories through the integration of architectural elements and details.
- Design the uppermost story, façade wall or roof line to complete the building design, add visual interest and be appropriate to the architectural style of the building without imposing overwhelming scale on adjacent uses.
- All buildings should provide more transparency at the street level.

f. Guiding Principles for Building Materials/Colors

- Encourage the use of predominant building materials that are characteristic of the community such as brick, wood, native stone and tinted/textured concrete masonry units and/or glass products. Other materials such as smooth-faced concrete block, undecorated precast concrete panels, pre-fabricated metal panels or non-durable materials should only be used as accents and not dominate the major building exterior

elevations. Piecemeal embellishment and frequent changes in material should be prohibited.

- Building materials at the first floors in particular should provide a level of detail and quality which is physically and emotionally comfortable for the pedestrian, and authentic in appearance.
- Remodel, rehabilitation and expansion projects should match the original finishes where reasonable and possible.
- Buildings with multiple exposures to roadways and/or public spaces should be encouraged to use consistent material combinations, quality and detailing to unify the building design.
- Use a combination of subtle, neutral and natural tones for the body of the building complemented with accent colors and materials.

g. Guiding Principles for Façade Modulation

- Building facades should consist of patterns that include color and/or texture at intervals (horizontally or vertically).
- A minimum percentage (for example, 33%) of each primary facade should consist of glazing on upper floors and 60% at ground level.
- Facades should include changes in relief such as cornices, projecting balconies, verandas or other useable spaces, wall insets, arcades, window display areas, bases, fenestration, material textures, etc. for at least 40% of the exterior wall area.
- Building frontages in excess of 100 feet in length should have offsets, jogs or other distinctive change in the façade, except at the street level. (see Zero Setback above)

h. Guiding Principle for Sense of Entry. Public entrances should be easily identified and made distinct from the remainder of the building either through architectural form or the use of color, material or texture of the façade.

i. Guiding Principles for Architectural Elements

- Building design should be encouraged to integrate architectural elements and details as components that enhance visual interest of building facades, support activity at and/or near ground level and provide human and pedestrian scale.
- Awnings, marquees or similar pedestrian shelters are highly encouraged and should be proportional to the building and located so as not to obscure the building's architectural details, while projecting far enough to provide shelter.
- All new building/business identification signage should be appropriately scaled and architecturally compatible with the design of an existing building on the same site or newly proposed buildings. The colors, materials and lighting of signage should be

visually restrained, be a minimal feature in the overall appearance of the building and not conceal or disfigure significant architectural features.

- Lighting should be consistent in style, design, height, size and color. Lighting used on building exteriors should be integrated with the building design and coordinate with architectural elements and building entries.
 - Screen service and building equipment at ground level, attached or on top of structures from public view using screening techniques, architectural elements, and materials that adequately conceal the equipment, are consistent with the building design and do not detract from the aesthetic appearance of the building.
 - Lighting should be directed downward to protect the night sky.
 - Trash receptacles should be located in side or rear yards, not visible from abutting streets and screened with durable materials consistent with the building design.
 - Decorative flags or banners should promote the identity of the place and enhance the character and attractiveness of the buildings or public spaces rather than advertise.
- j. **Guiding Principle for Landscaping.** Landscaping should be provided as required by the local jurisdiction's adopted streetscape plan and include plantings, trees and street amenities including tree grates, planters, public artwork, street lighting, pavers, trash and recycling containers, bike racks, benches, etc.
- k. **Guiding Principles for Parking/Loading and Service Areas/Drive-through Facilities**
- Parking/loading should be located to the rear of the primary building façades.
 - Structured parking should be designed as integrated structures compatible with surrounding structures and incorporate mixed use activates at grade to activate the street.
 - Design alley facades that share a corner with street facing facades should be inviting and safe for pedestrians.
 - Drive-in and drive- through facilities (e.g. associated with restaurants, banks and similar uses) should receive vehicular access from an alley or driveway and not directly from a street.
- l. **Guiding Principles for Public Spaces, Plazas, Parks**
- Public spaces, plazas, and parks should be visually welcoming, publicly accessible and visible to the street for safety. They should consider good solar orientation and wind protection. Ideally there should be one located within 2-3 blocks of every building (4-6 blocks apart) for easy access.

- Design the plaza as a catalyst to enhance urban pedestrian and transit circulation patterns and consider locating them along pedestrian corridors linking other open spaces.
 - A variety of sub-spaces—hard and soft—with fixed and movable seating should be included to attract a variety of group sizes-- and allow small groups to feel comfortable within what may be a larger space.
 - Deciduous trees should be provided for shading with lower branches limbed up at the bottom for visibility below; provide native or adapted, shrubs and trees for attractive seasonal display reflecting on downtown's eco-region; provide limited turf areas where appropriate for relaxing and games.
 - For safety, the design should include concepts of 'defensible space', clear sightlines, good lighting and provision of alternate "escape" paths. A plaza should afford good visual surveillance opportunities both from within the space and along the edges. Buildings facing these spaces should have active windows and doors providing 'eyes' on the spaces.
 - For sun and weather protection, provide sheltering elements such as pergolas, pavilions, awnings, canopies, and trellises.
 - Provide one linear foot of seating per each perimeter linear foot of a plaza; At least 50% of recommended seating should be secondary, in the form of steps, planter seat wafts, retaining walls, or mounds of turf.
 - Incorporate attractors such as seating, public art, natural play areas, fountains, cafes, food vendors, game tables, kiosks, places for performances, drinking fountains, and bike racks; consider active areas such as ice skating rinks, volleyball courts, and areas for other physical games.
 - Materials should be attractive, from local sources if possible, highly durable and low maintenance; paving should allow for areas of permeable paving for water infiltration.
 - Provide for pets with drinking fountains and appropriate waste disposal.
- m. **Guiding Principle for Green Infrastructure.** Green infrastructure is the interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas such as greenways, wetlands, parks, trees and native plant vegetation, which naturally manage stormwater, reduce flood risk and improve water quality. Urban areas should include existing natural open drainage streams and plan for new streams to support increased run-off from new pavement and buildings. These corridors and spaces provide an urban oasis for people and also provide wildlife habitat and migration corridors so often destroyed by urbanization.
- n. **Guiding Principle for Pet Infrastructure.** Many people can't live without their pets so a pet-friendly environment is important when encouraging people to live in downtowns. Include play areas in parks and plazas, drinking fountains, and waste management systems. Pet noise should be addressed through noise ordinances and building policies. Pet care facilities should be allowed uses in downtowns with proper consideration paid to noise and waste management.

2. Planning Tools

The first step in planning for sustainable Downtowns is to understand existing policies and plans already in place for the region and the individual city, and to analyze them for potential conflicts as any new planning proceeds for the Downtown. These would include:

a. Regional Plans

- Communities in Motion/Blueprint for Good Growth
- County Comprehensive Plans
- University, hospitals, and other plans for regional facilities
- Other regional systems such as rivers and drainages, open space, irrigation systems, utility plans

b. City Comprehensive Plan. Defines the role of Downtown within the city, land use, circulation patterns

c. Zoning Ordinances

- Specific District Ordinances
- Sign Ordinance
- Landscape Ordinance
- Parking Ordinance

d. Capital Improvement Plan. Analyze for alignment with city's goals for Downtown

e. Downtown Master Plan. An adopted Downtown master plan or Downtown plan is a prerequisite for a successful and sustainable Downtown. Whether an individual city is in the process of preparing a new Downtown plan, or is preparing to update a previously adopted plan, the following critical elements should be included in the process.

- **Existing conditions analysis**-including land use and ownership, transportation, public space, habitat and green space, character, views, parking (vehicles and bicycles), transit facilities, housing types and occupancies.
- **Infrastructure analysis**-utility infrastructure (sewer, water, power, gas, irrigation) capacity, utility aesthetics (for example, overhead vs. underground power and open irrigation), alternative/renewable sustainable technologies, pet infrastructure, conservation, waste and recycling, stormwater and green infrastructure, communications (telephone, cable, fiber).
- **Real estate market and demographic analysis**

- **Opportunities and constraints mapping with public involvement process**-decide what is special and worth keeping/supporting; opportunity areas to develop and problem areas to overcome. Identify stakeholders and project champions that are committed to the long term sustainability of Downtown.
- **Define Vision-Livability, Mobility, Prosperity, and Sustainability**
 - Livability-essence and character; community historic, government, cultural, educational spaces and places; entertainment and gathering spaces; recreational spaces, places and activities; diversity of housing and understanding of what is necessary to live in an urban environment; public art and identity; habitat and wildlife.
 - Mobility-accessible; pedestrian/bicycle friendly; transit supportive; visible and easily negotiable parking system.
 - Prosperity-balanced retail environment; support for existing and welcoming of new businesses; business mentoring and incubation support; business needs understood and supported.
 - Sustainability-environmentally sustainable, economically sustainable, socially sustainable.
- **Downtown Vision Map**-Define desired character (for example, build on unique history, diverse cultures, geology), uses and spaces, events and activities, synergies, infrastructure, circulation pattern, habitat corridors and spaces.
- **Strategic Plan/Implementation**-identify specific projects, implementation process including champions and incentives.
- **Monitor for progress and CELEBRATE SUCCESS!**

f. Other Regional or Local Requirements

- CO₂ Targets—Climate change policies
- Possible non-attainment designation for air quality
- Vehicle Miles Traveled reduction target

3. Inappropriate codes and zoning, restrictive heights, uses; inflexible code administration and regulatory overkill; overly prescriptive design standards; and onerous permitting process costing development time and money are the main regulatory barriers to be overcome to create sustainable Downtowns.

Traditional zoning standards are typically more applicable to new or greenfield development and less effective in built environments such as Downtowns. Use of a Downtown master plan is an excellent tool for determining the unique and particular characteristics of a Downtown and

forming zoning that works for that area. A Downtown zone that is specifically tailored just to that Downtown area is a good approach. The City of Nampa, for example, has created three sub-zones within its Downtown to respond to the individual characteristics within the Downtown area. Many times the “non-conforming” structures are what give an area identity; zoning codes should not impede the existence of such uses. Downtown zoning can also define the mix of uses that are so desired.

Cities can inhibit Downtown development through too much regulation. If planning has been done, and if zoning and design provisions are in place, then the process should be simple. Overlapping conditional use, design and duplicative review by over special purpose agencies should be consolidated. In particular, cities should review their conditional use permit process (which are typically overused) to respond to issues that should be anticipated through the planning and zoning code development. Cities should take the time to develop a thoughtful zoning ordinance with foresight rather than lumping a majority of uses into the conditional use process. Cities should also review their inter-governmental agreements with other public agencies to reduce the amount of review time. In these ways, the time and costs of permitting can be reduced.

Design is important, but the review process should be done efficiently. There is a balance between prescription and flexibility in design. The more prescription, the less need for a discretionary review process and use of a design board, but prescriptive standards can also be an inhibitor to unique and creative design. The City of Caldwell responded to this dilemma by creating a prescriptive process for small-scaled projects, and a more discretionary design process for the larger development. Many larger communities hire or retain a consultant to conduct design review. This is not unlike the use by cities of an engineer or engineering firm for their expertise and should be considered by the Valley cities.

In any process, there should be recognition that the process of design is iterative and the city should be involved early before substantial time and money has been expended by an applicant. For example, Garden City has initiated a Design Committee of lay and expert individuals who meet informally with applicants before any application is submitted. Other local notable examples of design processes that anticipate development needs are the City of Meridian’s contextual design guidelines, and the design templates for small planned unit developments in Garden City.

C. Current and Potential Funding Sources for Downtown Development

Options for funding capital investments for local governments in the State of Idaho:

1. Cash.

Taxing entity property tax amounts are limited to an annual increase of 3% plus and adjustment for new construction and the value of annexed property.

- a. Sinking Fund: A public entity could establish a reserve and set aside funds annually to build up an amount sufficient to pay cash for a specified investment. These allocations would have to compete annually with current budgetary expenses.
- b. Pay-as-you-go: If a project is of a nature that could be constructed in segments over an extended period of time, a local jurisdiction could schedule discrete elements to be built as funds are available.
- c. Allocation of budget savings: Many jurisdictions' budgetary practice calls for conservatively estimating revenue at a lower level than might actually be expected and estimating expenditures at a higher level than expected which generates actual cash carry-forward amounts beyond what has been allocated into a new budget year. When this occurs, a small cash balance results that some jurisdictions dedicate to capital projects.

2. General Obligation Bond Issue

Authority exists in state law for local governments to issue bonds to support capital investments. However, Idaho's constitution imposes a severe limitation on the issuance of debt so that it is very difficult to do. The Idaho State Constitution, Article VIII, Section 3, prohibits local governments from incurring debt or other obligations in excess of an amount that can be retired within any given year without the approval of a 2/3rd majority vote of those casting ballots in either a special or general election. There are certain, specific categories of debt that are allowed with a simple majority under a constitutional amendment adopted by the voters in 1949.

These limitations have acted to deter utilization of general obligation bonds by local governments. School Districts have often been successful in achieving success for voted bond issues, as have certain votes for facilities such as libraries or jails, although such approvals are not common.

The most recent session of the Idaho Legislature approved a series of constitutional amendments that would allow the issuance of debt for specified categories of public investment without a vote of the electorate, as long as no general tax support is required for the servicing of the annual debt payments. This modification is limited to airport facilities, electric power supply purchase contracts and publicly-owned hospitals. Final approval of the constitutional amendment will be required by a simple majority vote of the electorate at the November 2010 general election.

3. Serial Tax Levy

A serial tax levy is allowed for a specific capital investment to be funded over a period not to exceed 2 years. The serial levy calls for a simple majority public vote that specifies an annual amount to be collected in each of the two years of the authorization and the purpose for which the funds so authorized will be spent.

An example of this process is the \$10 million Boise Foothills Levy (\$5m per year for two years) approved in 2001 to fund open space preservation in the foothills. The two-year timeline limits the viability of this source. For larger projects, the annual levy must be so large for each of the two years that the impact on the property tax bill is likely sufficient to discourage voter approval. Under the current 2-year limitations, this source may be most viable for relatively small projects.

School districts are able to approve such levies for a ten-year period. If this time frame were available to other local governments, this could be a much more viable tool.

4. Local Improvement District (LID)

Local Improvement Districts (LID) are allowed to finance specific public improvements where benefit can be identified and allocated to abutting or otherwise benefitted properties. The LID is an independent entity with its own capacity to issue debt (bonds) with only the assessment payments available to debt service. Most often, LIDs are formed with the consent of those property owners who will benefit by the improvement, although Idaho law provides for action to establish an LID by the local governing body without the express approval of those to be assessed.

Those property owners subject to assessment normally have the option of paying their allocated share of the cost of the improvement up front or electing to pay in installments over a ten or twenty-year period. During the period of time when the assessment is outstanding, it is secured by a primary lien on the assessed property. Should the annual assessment obligation not be paid, the property is subject to foreclosure.

5. Community Infrastructure District (CID)

Community Infrastructure Districts finance public improvements similar to an LID but with the benefit identified as being infrastructure that serves the broader, regional community. The CID statute was passed in 2008 with the specific purpose of encouraging the funding and construction of regional community infrastructure in advance of actual developmental growth that creates the need for such additional infrastructure. This special taxing district is created to issue tax exempt bonds to finance the construction of the regional, community public facilities necessary to serve development. Neither a city nor a city's existing residents are responsible for the repayment of the bonds issued by the CID, only the residents who reside within the development financed by CID bonds. This new financing tool, that would allow growth to pay for growth, is just now being explored as an option in Eagle and Boise for large developments within their city limits. In May 2010, Boise approved the formulation of a CID for Harris Ranch, the first use of the statute in the state.

6. Business Improvement District (BID)

A Business Improvement District is authorized for a broad array of infrastructure and programmatic investments designed to benefit a designated commercial area. The assessment amount and basis is determined by the governing body of the jurisdiction, usually a City Council. Most often this source of funding produces insufficient revenues for large-scale investments. Usage in Idaho has generally been restricted to marketing and beautification efforts in Downtown areas. Boise and Twin Falls are examples of cities with existing BIDs.

7. Revenue Allocation District

Idaho has provided for the establishment of urban renewal areas since 1965. Initially, the funding for such programs was exclusively through federal urban renewal and model cities programs. As those programs declined at the federal level, a process used in most other states to fund redevelopment activities was brought to Idaho through legislative enactment. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is the term commonly used throughout the United States for this mechanism, but the term used in Idaho is Revenue Allocation as it was deemed more accurate in terms of how the system works within the property tax system in Idaho.

State law established an Urban Renewal Agency in each city and county in the state. The powers are brought forward by action of the local governing body. Once empowered, the Urban Renewal Agency has broad powers to prepare plans for the redevelopment of a designated area, to issue debt to support projects identified in the redevelopment plan, and to receive funds to implement the adopted plans.

The revenue allocation process provides that the property tax yield from any assessed value increase occurring in the designated urban renewal district after the year the urban renewal area is established is “allocated” to the urban renewal agency to fund investments identified in the urban renewal plan. An urban renewal plan can exist for a period not to exceed 24 years.

A unique aspect of this process is the ability of an urban renewal agency to issue debt without a popular vote. This is the result of the fact that the urban renewal agency is not a creature of the local government; it is an independent entity with its powers specified in state law. While this independent nature has been challenged on three occasions, the Idaho Supreme Court has upheld the ability to issue debt, most recently in November of 2009.

Over 30 cities and one county have active urban renewal programs in place as of 2010. Cities from Boise (population 215,000) to Harrison (population 160) either have programs in place or are in the process of implementing them.

8. Grants

a. Federal

The types and levels of federal assistance to communities have ebbed and flowed over the years. Through the 1960s and 1970s, there was a high level of federal investment in local initiatives through a variety of categorical grant programs with defined federal objectives, as well as a more robust array of Community Development Block Grants that provided maximum discretion on the part of local officials in how the grants might be spent. As concern over the federal deficit grew, the federal government started to pull back on the

levels of support for domestic programs. While never completely eliminating such investments, there was growing competition for a shrinking percentage of the national budget.

Recently, in response to the current recession, we have witnessed a higher level of funding being made available to communities for a variety of purposes, mostly emphasizing infrastructure investment that could be initiated quickly to stimulate employment (the so-called “shovel-ready” projects). These resources have represented a welcome infusion of money to allow prompt investment into projects too long languishing on drawing boards. However, such external funding is not without its challenges. Local matching funds are often either a requirement for award or are essential in competing against a large number of other entities seeking access to the same funds. Once a community is successful in securing funding, responding to the record-keeping and reporting requirements of the granting agency present new challenges, especially for smaller jurisdictions.

b. State

Grants in aid from state agencies are similar to those from similar sources with many of the same benefits and obligations. However, as the state budget becomes constrained, the availability of resources to assist local governments declines. Even in more normal times, state aid often is made available in the form of low-interest loans instead of outright grants. Loans from the state, versus grants, allow state support to continue over a longer time frame as funds are re-infused into the system through loan repayments.

c. Private Foundations

While private philanthropy has a long history in this country of supporting a variety of community initiatives, many of the charters of these organizations, if not most, preclude grants to public agencies instead focusing their efforts on the not-for-profit sector. This fact calls out for the development of partnerships with community-based organizations that are eligible to seek funding from private sources. The level of funding provided by these private entities is frequently too small when considering the large scale of most public infrastructure investments. However, they can often provide the critical seed money to establish a broad-based community initiative on a given issue.

9. Impact Fees.

In an attempt to ensure adequate public facilities are available to serve new growth and development, local governments, in consultation with an advisory committee, are empowered to charge impact fees solely on new development to be used for capital improvements attributable to that new development. Local governments establish levels of service for certain public facilities or capital improvements and then create a plan for the development of capital improvements to meet those levels of service (a capital improvements plan or “CIP”). A CIP identifies funding sources (other than impact fees) to raise existing level of service deficiencies to the planned levels of service. A CIP also establishes the proportionate share of the cost of the public facilities that will be needed to serve new growth and development. It is that amount, in the form of impact fees, charged to that new growth and development.

Options for funding capital investments for local governments currently not available in the State of Idaho:

To a large degree, the ultimate solution to the issues involves the state. Idaho is not only a Dillon Rule State, but is the most “Dillon” of the Dillon Rule States – that is, Idaho has the most restrictive, state imposed, limitations on independent local government actions. Meaningful response to the concerns raised by the Valley cities will compel addressing this reality.

A comprehensive review of the existing statutory structure is an important step to see where opportunities or unused tools might exist for implementing plans. Are there relatively minor tweaks to existing law that will move us closer to the Valley cities’ goals? We often seek the home run, when a series of base hits might be more effective although less spectacular. One suggestion is to modify the Capital Levy statute currently limited to two-year vote of 50% + to a 5 or 10 year levy as is currently allowed for School Districts. This would be in complete conformance with the existing Supreme Court rulings on local government debt and would avoid long-term interest and issuance cost – a concern of the framers of the Idaho Constitution as noted in their deliberations in 1889.

Local government may not be properly structured to facilitate plan implementation. With government so purposefully dispersed among often competing political bodies, nobody is in charge to make anything happen. We complain about the ineffectiveness of local government, but impose a structure that helps ensure it stays ineffective. One technique that could offset entrenched government is found in the State of Montana. Montana allows each local government to go through a government structure review every ten years to ensure the government remains current in its capacity to provide cost-effective public service for its citizens. Perhaps we need a similar review technique in Idaho. Perhaps we should include the state bureaucracy in that review as well.

1. Potential Expanded Authority.

As we look at potential considerations for expanded local government authority, we may suggest that the highest priority is to ensure that none of the current authority is eroded. New restrictions are brought forward each year to the Legislature that would diminish the effectiveness of the few tools that are available.

We have noted in other parts of this report that Idaho has one of the most restrictive regimens for the funding of local operating or capital initiatives. As we consider existing or desired sources of funding for local government, we also must recognize the exceptional limitation on incurring long-term debt that is often required in implementing a major capital project. As noted above, the Idaho Constitution requires local government entities seeking to incur debt beyond any fiscal year to obtain voter approval with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority. So, even with a source of funds to service debt, there is a high bar established to gain voter approval to issue the debt. This has served as an impediment in project implementation. While this could be changed with an amendment to the State Constitution, such an action would have to be initiated by the legislature; however, there seems to be little interest in pursuing a broad-based modification to this limitation in the current environment. As noted above, the 2010 Session of the Idaho Legislature initiated a Constitutional amendment that would help local governments by eliminating any voter approval for certain specified revenue bonds that would not require any tax support. Perhaps, based upon this experience, and assuming voter ratification of the amendment in the November general election, the list of revenue bonds could be expanded.

2. **Local Option Sales Tax.**

While not a subject of discussion in the most recent legislative session, there has been substantial conversation in the past about granting local governments the authority to propose to their electorate a local option sales tax to fund locally identified needs. This approach was initially suggested to fund transportation projects, but was later expanded at the request of local jurisdictions to provide general authority allowing the decision on local needs, whether transportation-based or otherwise, to be made at that level.

3. **Expanded time frame for Serial Tax Levies.**

We noted above, there is authority to seek voter approval of a two-year property tax levy to fund specified capital investments. Currently, the short duration of this tool relegates its use to relatively small scale projects due to the magnitude of a tax levy needed over that short period of time. If a longer timeframe were permitted, perhaps five to ten years (similar to current school district authority) the opportunity to extend affordable funding and project implementation over a reasonable period would make more investment possible even under the existing constricted constitutional mandates.

4. **Government Structure.**

The structure of our governmental institutions has remained essentially static since statehood in 1890. Energy facility siting, airport construction, water quality facilities and all similar infrastructure obligations were clearly not on the minds of those deciding the basics of government in Idaho in the 19th century. One might debate whether our systems were adequate for the demands upon government in 1890, however one can hardly suggest that such a system remains best suited for a 21st century urban economy. Rather than hold ourselves back, we should spend the time to provide for a new forward look at what we expect of our public institutions at all levels -- state, county, local and special district -- and construct a system that will respond to today's demands and realities. Such a task could be daunting and we are unaware of any state that has undertaken such a comprehensive analysis, but the current fiscal trauma may be the best time to compel a review when possibilities unthinkable in better times might be more achievable. There is no better moment.

D. Downtown Incentives

The following research of incentives used in other regions was conducted by Karen Doherty, HDR.

- Downtown residential tax exemption for housing that meets criteria and for a maximum period. Excludes portions of buildings not residential. Abatement may be tied to performance of developer to meet the development schedule.
- Property tax exemption for designated heritage properties. Exemption granted to a maximum value based on a formula up to specific number of years.
- Property tax exemptions for economic development for a specific period that meet criteria to qualify. Exemption varies from dependent on a point system.
- Low interest loans to building owners who renovate, redevelop, or stabilize properties the targeted areas.
- Forgivable loan for new and existing downtown businesses. Business to remain in operation a designated period.
- Forgivable loans for existing retail in danger of going out of business due to current economic conditions. Must remain in business for a specific period after loan funding.
- Façade improvement grants up to designated percentage of cost.
- Design consultation grants related to façade improvements.
- Non-profit impact fee assistance for non-profits that undertake construction projects.
- Relocation assistance grants for businesses relocating to the downtown from other locations.
- Grants for tenant improvements based on a designated percentage of cost and number of full-time employees.
- Freezing taxes at the predevelopment level for a predetermined period of time related to the investment by the property owner, i.e. investment-in-lieu-of –taxes.
- Grants to attract new retail and restaurants to targeted areas provided by the redevelopment agency. Upfront costs/expenses, including rental subsidies, granted for a designated period for qualifying projects based on higher maximum amount for a new business than for expansion of an existing business.
- Reduced off-street parking requirements, including use of shared parking.
- Waivers of storm drainage upgrade costs.
- Sales tax rebates on labor and materials used to remodel, rehabilitate, or build new.

- Green building grant programs.
- Grants to cover a portion of building owner streetscape improvements.
- Financial assistance to building owners to overcome unique and challenging barriers associated with reusing older buildings.

E. List of Interview Participants

City of Nampa

William Nichols	Mayor Tom Dale	Chris Veloz	Aaron Randell
LaRita Schandorff	Terrence White	Lance McGrath	Dan Nogales
Kevin Myers	Aaron Brown	Norm Holm	Curtis Homer
John Carpenter	Harold Kropp	Cliff Long	

City of Meridian

Rick Venenzuela	Tom Barry	Julie Pipal	Joey Schueler
Anna Canning	Mayor Tammy de Weerd	Shaun Wardle	Steve Siddoway
Pete Friedman	Mike McCabe		

City of Eagle

Lynne Sedlacek	Lee Schrack	Teri Bath	Bill Vaughn
Al Shoushtarian	Robert S. Bruce	Cameron Arial	Mayor Phil Bandy
Gene Blaycock	Steve Purvis	Nichoel Baird Spencer	

City of Garden City

Goldy	Peggy Clements	Rich Childress	Mayor John Evans
Jenah Thornborrow	Dave Evans		Jim Neill
Rod McDowell	Steve Fulton		

City of Boise City

John Brunelle	Joy Kealey	Jenifer Gilliland	Mary Ann Jordan
Bryant Forrester	David Wali	Doug Cooper	Michael Lloyd
Karen Sander	Clay Carley	Pat Rice	Tim Wilcomb
David Eberle	Gary Christensen	Erik Hansen	Dave Krick
CeCe Gassner	Jennifer Stevens	Brandy Wilson	Jim Everett
Bill Connors	Alan Shealy	Kerrie Quinn	Moe Therrien
Lisa Benjamin	John May	Maggie Soderberg	

City of Star

Mayor Nate Mitchell	Delta James	Richard Tinsley	Betty Smith
Gary Smith	Theresa Tinsley	John R. Tomkinson	Ray Stokes

Regional

John Gardner	Ken Howell	Nick Miller	Jack Coonce
Gerald Hunter	Jeff Needs	Aaron Scheff	Mark Dunham
Cathy Silak	Sara Baker	Ray Stark	
Kelli Fairless	Lt. Governor Brad Little		

F. Major Themes from the Interviews

- First and fundamentally, there is a unanimous view that our Downtowns are critical to the vitality and livability of each of our communities and the Treasure Valley as a whole. They have great foundations with even greater potential. Leaders are vested in the success of their Downtowns and are ready-made foot soldiers for future initiatives, projects and collaboration.
- A clearer vision is needed from the public sector to crystallize all stakeholders' motivation and help set a road map. Fragmentation was a common theme, as was "lack of vision" from political leaders. While there may be a myriad of public sector plan documents, the number of documents alone has not translated at all to a well-understood, community-wide set of goals and opportunities.
- We should not forget those times that we have had clear vision. There were examples of plans completed perhaps only five years ago that contain both vision and strategies for implementing the vision. Yet these plans have been put on a website or the shelf, forgotten, and similar plans are again being conducted. Cities could take a critical review of what they have. If it's not broke, don't fix it, but build on top of it.
- There is a need to look beyond the Downtowns as community amenities and leverage their potential as economic engines. Oftentimes, the Downtowns are viewed as just a shopping district or gathering place or crossroads. They're much more – they are the commercial hubs and should then be the starting points for new commerce. Opportunities to reposition jobs into the Downtown, relocate offices and provide innovative homes and programs for employers need to be a primary focus.
- The public sector needs to find or commit resources to partner with the private sector and jump-start new activity or erase lagging ills. More importantly, these recommendations are not just about new projects, but about curing some long-standing negatives, such as empty storefronts, lack of public art, lack of animation, and the need for new retail or restaurants. The financial support may not need to be sizable, but it is necessary to help provide the "seed capital" for new work in our Downtowns.
- Cities need an actionable, reportable process for stimulating bold and doable action in the Downtowns. There is a strong sense that "not enough is happening" or "we can't get meaningful projects out of the starting gate." True prioritization, backed by a means to track progress and supported by real horsepower was identified as a huge necessity. A reporting and accountability system needs to be outlined as well as recognition for getting the work done.
- There is an ongoing opportunity to leverage current strengths and assets in the Downtowns. We should be working with our long-term, vested stakeholders – universities, health care facilities, arts and cultural assets and leading employers – to create high-impact plans, districts, events and identities for our Downtowns. It is much easier to generate heat from an existing furnace than it is to start a fire from scratch.

G. Interview Topics by City

1. Boise

- a. No clear consensus on Downtown boundaries
- b. Local option tax/LID/URD is needed
- c. Need more private champions to help city
- d. More workforce housing
- e. Dissolve or fix ACHD
- f. ULI enabled ACHD (bad outcome)
- g. Need: big ideas + strategy + champions
- h. JUMP, library, affordable housing, Macys. No convention center.
- i. BoDo, Grove, independent businesses, 8th street.
- j. Need urban housing
- k. Regulations hinder goals (impact fees)
- l. Develop incentives: need to analyze barriers and push fixes
- m. Draws: market and library
- n. One-way and two-way streets
- o. “Cool and funky”
- p. Diffuse decision-making→why? Fix? →Can plan, but can’t implement
- q. Protect safety→address homeless and pan-handling
- r. Circulator/reliable public transportation
- s. Stronger BSU-Downtown connection
- t. Farmers market permanence
- u. Focus and prioritize (JUMP and street car)
- v. Up-front strategy and execution (example is CWI)
- w. Need private sector champions
- x. Bronco Nation

2. Eagle

- a. Need vision and buy-in→what do people want?

- b. Better government leadership; too divisive
- c. Quaint or vibrant? → If: viticulture? If anchors?
- d. North-south connectivity
- e. Unclear regulatory process
- f. Personal conflicts and no clear mandate

3. Garden City

- a. No traditional Downtown: 10 years anchors and nodes
- b. Existing uses are re-development barriers and antiquated infrastructure
- c. Disconnect between government entities
- d. Beneficial comprehensive plan and ordinances
- e. Need more private sector involvement
- f. Plan future of fairgrounds
- g. ACHD inhibiting connectivity
- h. Late-comer fees
- i. Waive fees → re-development
- j. Market data and marketing – compared to Boise
- k. Good consensus and buy-in, but they need a champion.

4. Meridian

- a. Maximize railroad potential
- b. Leverage with city services Downtown
- c. Seeking grants → need clearinghouse
- d. Raise awareness about parking
- e. Leadership gap between energy and knowledge
- f. Lot pattern vs. infrastructure
- g. Constraints regarding aggregating property
- h. Compatible uses are segregated
- i. ACHD fee-free areas
- j. Allowed uses and design review

- k. Create easier access for youth to parks and amenities
- l. Bike connectivity to parks and amenities
- m. Public works old and in need of repair
- n. Parks as leverage. Lease parks and parking
- o. Lack of institutional memory; build on studies already done
- p. Chamber – more direct role in assisting businesses
- q. Locating City Hall downtown difficult, but set the symbolic tone

5. Nampa

- a. Clarify financing authority
- b. Quick review process (plans, policies, infrastructure)
- c. Coordination and focus
- d. Motivate owners to improve their properties
- e. Put civic and cultural uses Downtown
- f. Make it easy to draw people to the Downtown
- g. Catalyst public projects
- h. Well articulated plans with leadership and support
- i. Using the downturn to plan
- j. Extend partnerships to property owners
- k. Connect new residents
- l. Basic infrastructure improvements
- m. Consolidated functions→critical mass

6. Star

- a. Public engagement and support
- b. Funding
- c. More traditional architecture
- d. Supermarket and services
- e. Street lights, sidewalks
- f. Need rooftops to support commercial

- g. Three priorities
 - I. Riverwalk (identified as #1 from previous community involvement program)
 - II. Downtown re-vitalization
 - III. Resolution of highway 44

7. Regional Perspectives

- a. Awareness of high-level planning
- b. Government catalyst
- c. BSU is in the Downtown, but St. Luke's is not because of East End desire for control
- d. Downtown needs to be a neighborhood with the services of a neighborhood (e.g., grocery)
- e. Build on uniqueness
- f. Each city should recognize it does have a downtown; not just a suburb of Boise
- g. No impact fee in downtowns
- h. Affordable housing just outside of Downtown (walkable?)
- i. ACHD not so bad; solution oriented
- j. Boise attitude is a roadblock; cumbersome, not solution oriented
- k. Caldwell and Meridian are very welcoming
- l. Need more funding tools
- m. Jurisdictional incongruity-too many permits
- n. Gubernatorial leadership is lacking
- o. JUMP at risk because of Boise's arrogance; shooing developers elsewhere
- p. Airport expansion
- q. Convention center
- r. Idaho cities 46th in power and impotence
- s. Antiquated legal system: rural and urban
- t. Anti-Ada County is true
- u. Too many taxes
- v. Ordinances tailored to greenfields; reuse and re-development is blocked
- w. Decisions on the edge affect downtown

H. Treasure Valley Downtown Plans and Projects

1. Boise

Boise Downtown R/UDAT

This study influenced the fundamental re-direction of Downtown and set in place the major recommendations that were the foundation for future development of Downtown Boise.

(Central District) Urban Design Plan – Framework Master Plan & Design Guidelines (1987)

The original Central urban renewal district was comprised of two federal urban renewal project areas. Project Area I was formed in 1968 and Project Area II was formed in 1970. These project areas covered twelve and one-half blocks of Downtown Boise. The original plans for these areas focused on land acquisition, clearance of existing buildings and attracting a major regional shopping mall to Downtown Boise. Approximately nine blocks were cleared. New development was built, including One Capital Center, Statehouse Inn, Grove Street Garage, Idaho First National Bank Tower (now the U.S. Bank Tower), Boise City Hall and the Ada County Administration Building. Efforts to attract a shopping mall, however, were unsuccessful. In 1987, the Boise City Council established a new vision and direction for the Downtown core and made major revisions to the Central District urban renewal plan. The district boundary was amended to include 15 blocks and the Boise Downtown Urban Design Plan – Framework Master Plan & Design Guidelines was adopted. This document continues to guide redevelopment in the Central District. The 1987 plan focuses on creating a fine-grained, people-oriented environment with beautiful streets, parks and plazas, retaining historic buildings. The current extent of the Central District is from 130 feet south of Front Street to Bannock Street and from 9th Street and to Capitol Boulevard. It also includes the block occupied by Boise City Hall and encompasses 35 acres.

Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan (2001)

The Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan is the guiding policy and urban design document for the majority of the Westside Downtown urban renewal district. The district was established in 2001, as the third urban renewal district in Boise. Urban renewal designation enabled additional public financing options and was intended to reinvigorate and enhance the area. The plan addresses many issues, including urban design and character, intensity and placement of land uses, the need for civic spaces, as well as parking, circulation, and mobility.

River Street-Old Boise Urban Renewal District (2004)

The River Street-Myrtle Street urban renewal district was originally formed in 1994. In 2004, it was amended to incorporate the Old Boise-Eastside area and other parcels and was renamed the River Myrtle-Old Boise urban renewal district. This district now includes 340 acres. Two master plans have been adopted to guide redevelopment of this district: Old Boise-Eastside and River Street-Myrtle Street.

Old Boise-Eastside Master Plan (2004)

This master plan covers the area approximately from Capitol Boulevard to Broadway and from Jefferson Street to Grove Street, excluding St. Luke's Regional Medical Center; approximately 49 acres. The existing urban fabric is fine grained and includes numerous historic buildings. The area includes a commercial district from the pioneer days and a traditional neighborhood with early 20th century houses and tree-lined streets. The preferred development concept does not

envision a dramatic change in character other than a modest increase in intensity, a better balance between land uses, slowing the conversion of houses to offices and adding housing. The plan emphasizes increasing the number of people living in Old Boise-Eastside, which will promote retail vitality, allow people to work and live in Downtown, reduce traffic congestion and increase safety. Higher density, mixed use redevelopment is expected on vacant or underutilized parcels surrounding the historic commercial district.

River Street-Myrtle Street Master Plan (2004)

This master plan covers the area approximately from Broadway to Americana and from Grove Street to the Boise River Greenbelt; approximately 291 acres. The master plan describes a preferred development concept including desired land uses and intensities, and provides design and development guidelines and action steps for building and site design, historic resources, street character, civic spaces, transportation and parking. The plan identifies seven sub-districts and provides a detailed description of existing conditions and desired outcomes for these areas. The plan envisions the development of four in-town urban neighborhoods in Parkside, the Warehouse/Cultural District and the River Street neighborhood areas. These areas would include housing, neighborhood retail and a mix of commercial uses. How development should happen along Front and Myrtle streets is given particular attention.

Downtown Boise Streetscape Standards (1987; Amended 2007)

This planning document describes seven types of street character and has a map which shows the character type that applies to the street segments in the Downtown planning area. Each character type has a diagram showing how the sidewalk area is to be paved, whether trees are in grates or tree lawns, and types of furnishings that are to be installed. The Streetscape Standards are intended to create a network of attractive sidewalks that provide an inviting setting for private development and encourage walking and bicycling in the Downtown planning area. This document is a companion to the Downtown Boise Elements of Continuity.

Downtown Boise Elements of Continuity (1987; Amended 2007)

This document provides detailed specifications for the furnishings to be used in Downtown streetscapes. Furnishings include brick pavers, tree grates, benches, planters, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, bollards, drinking fountains and newspaper racks. The Elements of Continuity is intended to create a consistent palette of furnishings that unify the overall look of Downtown streets. This document is a companion to the Downtown Boise Streetscape Standards.

Downtown – Wide Plans Downtown Boise Policy Plan (1993)

Boise City prepared this plan at the request of the Downtown Boise Association (DBA). The purpose of this plan was to preserve and enhance the strengths of Downtown businesses by providing guidance for dynamic and viable employment, business, and service center by emphasizing its economic strengths. The plan includes goals and policies regarding land use, business and residential development, transportation and parking. The key objectives in this plan were incorporated into the 1997 Boise City Comprehensive Plan.

Downtown Boise Mobility Study (2007)

The Downtown Boise Mobility Study (DBMS) was undertaken by a consortium including Boise City, CCDC, Ada County Highway District, Valley Ride, Idaho Transportation Department, COMPASS and Boise State University. The study presents a comprehensive approach to mobility within Downtown Boise and for people traveling from, to and through the Downtown area. It analyses the current state of transportation systems in Downtown, projects future growth in

Downtown to 2025, analyzes the transportation impacts and recommends programs and capital projects that:

- support the vision for Downtown as a vibrant, mixed-use, people-oriented urban center for Boise and the region; and
- are robust enough to handle future transportation demands

Key recommendations for Downtown include: Develop a Downtown multimodal center and circulator (transit line) and create a network of pedestrian and bicycle routes that make transit, walking or bicycling practical as an alternative to using an automobile; and encourage mixed-use in Downtown to allow more people to live close to where they work. The study also recommends improving the regional transit system to get commuters to and from Downtown and to reduce traffic congestion at peak commute times on Downtown streets.

Downtown Cultural District Master Plan (1998)

The original River Street-Myrtle Street Urban design Plan adopted by the Boise City Council in 1994 introduced the idea of creating a Boise Cultural District along South 8th Street. The Boise Cultural District Master Plan was prepared by the Boise City Arts Commission and CCDC in 1998. It proposes the official designation of a cultural district and using that district as a cornerstone for expanding artistic, cultural and educational activities in Downtown. Since then, the Cultural District has been recognized as being between 6th and 9th Street from Idaho Street to the Boise River, and including the cultural institutions in Julia Davis Park. A map identifying 23 cultural facilities in this area has been published, and signage and kiosks have been installed.

Westside Downtown Urban Renewal District -Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan (2001)

This master plan establishes a preferred land use plan and guidelines for building design, civic spaces, street character, transit, a bicycle and pedestrian network, streetscapes and sustainability. The Boise City Council adopted this plan in conjunction with the formation of the Westside Downtown urban renewal district in 2001. The district contains approximately 143.5 acres and is bounded approximately by 9th, Grove, 16th and Washington streets. The plan envisions the expansion of the Downtown business core westward to 13th Street and creation of a mixed-use, urban neighborhood with an emphasis on housing between 13th and 16th streets.

2. Caldwell

Framework Master Plan (2009)

Caldwell is now working on the third generation plan for Downtown redevelopment, called the Red Carpet Plan. A Framework Planning Committee, along with Downtown business owners, are working to develop a block-by-block specific plan of what properties should be re-developed. The planning also includes priorities for funding and timelines for action. The Framework Plan is being completed with the help of CSHQA Architects and Oppenheimer Development.

Catalyst Project (current)

Phase 1 is the construction of a 39,000 S.F. campus for the Treasure Valley Community College in partnership with Oppenheimer Development Corporation. Construction is currently underway. Phase 2 is a new city hall.

3. Eagle

Eagle Downtown

The University of Idaho Urban Design and Architecture students prepared a design plan for the Downtown. The City is currently developing an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to include the recommendations of the design Team's plan.

4. Garden City

Idaho Expo Site

While the Expo Idaho property is in the center of Garden City, it is not annexed and is still a part of Ada County's jurisdiction. In 2007, Colliers International studied the redevelopment potential of the 240-acre property. Ada County asked Colliers to examine whether it would be feasible to sell all, or portions of the property to fund the redevelopment or relocation of the aging Western Idaho Fair/Expo Idaho facilities. During the 15-month study, Colliers analyzed the property's current condition and market value. Colliers identified three potential redevelopment strategies for Ada County Commissioners to consider. Acting on a recommendation from Ada County's Western Idaho Fair Advisory Board, the Commissioners have decided not to explore redeveloping the Western Idaho Fair/Expo Idaho property anytime soon. The study examined three options which are summarized below:

"STATUS QUO"

This plan creates approximately 94 acres of mixed-use (commercial/residential) property Ada County could sell to help cover the cost of renovations and redevelopment. Renovations to the existing facilities would include:

- Upgrading and modernizing all Expo Idaho facilities and adding a commercial kitchen for catering events
- Moving the Western Idaho Fair Food Court and Midway north of revitalized Expo Idaho facilities
- Relocating the 14-acre RV Park currently located adjacent to the Boise River to the northernmost corner of the property
- Upgrading seating capacity for the Boise Hawks stadium and renovating the parking lot facilities so stadium owners could charge for parking when the stadium is in use.

"HYBRID"

This plan creates between 90 and 150 acres of mixed-use (commercial/residential) property Ada County could sell to help fund recommended facility upgrades. This option identified four different redevelopment scenarios, several involved moving the fairgrounds to a new location and making significant changes to the Expo Idaho property. The basic tenets of these varying models included:

- Eliminating the RV Park on the property
- Increasing the size of the Expo Idaho building and adding a commercial kitchen to the facilities
- Upgrading and modernizing all Expo Idaho facilities
- Moving the fairgrounds to an off-site location, and eliminating the Les Bois Park facility to accommodate the expansion and necessary renovations

"CLEAN SLATE"

This plan examined the potential of selling the entire 240-acre Western Idaho Fair/Expo Idaho property for private development. Revenues from the sale of the property would help fund the relocation and construction of new fairgrounds and Expo Idaho facilities elsewhere in Ada County. The consultants initially identified Murgurtio Park, situated between Cole and Maple Grove Roads in south Boise, as a potential location for relocation. Upon further examination it was determined the land did not have the necessary infrastructure to handle traffic generated by fairgoers. Colliers identified another potential site near Kuna Mora Road, but later determined current market values prohibited the County from generating enough revenue from the sale of the Western Idaho Fair/Expo Idaho property to fully cover the cost of redevelopment.

5. Meridian

Downtown Master Plan The Meridian Downtown Development Corporation has completed an urban renewal master planning effort known as "Destination Downtown." The plan defines a desired future vision for Downtown Meridian, and identifies potential opportunities and strategies for strengthening Downtown's role in the Meridian community and Treasure Valley. The Vision is a graphic illustration of the community's vision to generate support, excitement and interest in Downtown. It visually illustrates the community vision and a range of possible opportunities and concepts for Downtown. Implementing the Vision for Downtown is provided in a strategic plan of action. This document is intended to be a working document and a guide for decision-makers. It contains a list of 33 individual projects identified by the Meridian Stakeholders to implement the Vision. Each project describes the name of the project, its objectives, likely stakeholders, and participants. The Meridian stakeholders assigned a timeline and priority to each project, and helped brainstorm a series of specific implementation action items for each. The Market Analysis provides background information and specific recommendations for targeting specific economic development strategies and opportunities for Meridian's Downtown. The Parking Analysis provides a background study on parking conditions in Downtown. It also provides a summary of existing parking conditions, an overview of different parking management strategies, and specific recommendations and projections for meeting Meridian's future Downtown parking demands.

6. Nampa

Central Nampa Revitalization Blueprint (2004)

The Blueprint program is a public-private partnership fostered by a City government committed to growing business and building community in Central Nampa. The Blueprint calls for designation of four distinct and complementary development districts: a Civic Campus, Classic Village, Historic Downtown and Transit Village. Each district will have its own character, target markets and land use orientation. Together, the four will connect to local and regional markets emerging in the western Treasure Valley. Strongly driven by detailed market analysis, the Blueprint seeks to establish greater economic and social ties with the community, especially young families and seniors – major segments of Nampa's growing population. Recommended physical improvements will require an investment of about \$1.33 million over the next four years.

Nampa Streetscape (2009)

The streetscape plan identifies street typologies for the three sub-areas within the Downtown core. The plan identifies distinctive streetscapes for each sub-district that are compatible with

the intended land uses in each area. An event street, gateway and parkway designs are also included in the plan.

7. Star

Downtown Revitalization Master Plan (on-going)

Star has engaged the services of Sage Resources with assistance from Keller Engineering to prepare a Downtown Revitalization Master Plan over the next ten months. The goal is to identify infrastructure improvements that could qualify in the next round of funding for a Community Development Block Grant. The scope of services is still being developed but the development of streetscape improvements that would improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connection with the River Walk appear to be a high priority. The City's Economic Development Committee will provide leadership in the development of the plan.

8. Regional

ULI Advisory Services Program Report: Ada County, Idaho; Planning for Growth in the Treasure Valley (February 2005)

This report, commissioned by Ada County, examined the role and impact that master-planned communities have on a region. In particular, the request of ULI was to see how such development will affect the region's promotion of infill development. The panel was asked to assess current growth patterns and projected development trends in the Valley and to provide recommendations on how the County and its cities can best accommodate growth. The panel also was asked to provide relevant examples from other parts of the country and to suggest how the Treasure Valley can learn from others' successes and failures.

The key recommendations of the report were:

- Enforce and implement the Blueprint for Quality Growth;
- Promote infill development;
- Plan for high-quality development;
- Focus on the fringe; and
- No more unilateral behavior

Communities in Motion (2006; current update underway)

Communities in Motion (CIM) is a long range transportation plan for the six county region, including Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Boise and Payette Counties. Communities in Motion evaluates projected population and employment growth, current and future transportation needs, safety, financial capacity, and preservation of the human and natural environment. The plan established and evaluated numerous growth scenarios for growth in 2030.

The adopted scenario is known as "Community Choices" and addresses:

- How land use affects transportation
- How investments in transportation influence growth
- What the transportation system is supposed to achieve
- How transportation projects are selected
- How transportation projects serve regional needs

The plan is required to be updated every four years. A current update is underway and is expected to be completed by August 2010. The update is intended to focus on financial limitations for transportation funding and prioritization of needed corridors.

ULI Advisory Services Program Report: Ada County Highway District (June 2007)

This study and report was commissioned by the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) to examine how to resolve disputes between the district and the cities and county. The report concluded that the disputes, while generic to the district and long-standing, had been exacerbated by the tremendous growth, and the disputes were similar to the issues that had brought three previous ULI panels to the area in the past fifteen years. This report made the following findings and recommendations:

- Despite the Communities in Motion and the Blueprint for Good Growth efforts, a common vision does not exist for development and land use plans are not well coordinated across jurisdictions.
- ACHD does not have enough funding to fulfill its mission, and is challenged to understand how to spend scarce resources when the land use agencies do not follow their adopted plans. When scarce resources are used, the roads are frequently not supported by the cities' plans.
- ACHD fails to meet the areas needs for routine services, and needs to change its service delivery systems, especially in working with the other public agencies.
- A joint powers authority among the district, the cities and the county needs to be established to accomplish the following:
 - Improve the coordination and reduce the inter-jurisdictional disputes.
 - Improve the quality of development.
 - Influence state legislation to improve standards for land development.

In response to the report findings, an informal alliance of the jurisdictions has been established.

Idaho Smart Growth/ULI Idaho Infill Reports

Idaho Smart Growth, (2010) *Quality Infill: Recommendation and Tools* recommends ten priority actions to ensure quality in-fill projects that complement existing neighborhoods.

Idaho Smart Growth, (2040) *The Consequences of Residential Infill Development on Existing Neighborhoods in the Treasure Valley* examines the case studies of built in-fill projects and analyzes through historical documentation, surveys and other data if the concerns of the neighborhoods were realized or not.

http://www.idahosmartgrowth.org/index.php/resources/resource/recommended_reading/.

Blueprint for Good Growth (on-going)

The Blueprint for Good Growth is a collaborative multi-jurisdictional process and plan intended to coordinate land use and public facility decisions. The process includes a consortium of elected officials from Ada County, Ada County cities, Ada County Highway District and Idaho Transportation Department. The consortium is supported on a technical/steering committee by representatives of a broad range of interests from both public agencies and private entities.

The plan, adopted in September 2006, establishes an overall framework for growth management in Ada County that includes policies and strategies recommended to be incorporated into the plans, regulations and practices of the participating public agencies. The Plan identifies the main issues to be addressed in the region, establishes goals, objectives and policies, and identifies strategies that should be pursued by each of the agencies to achieve the goals established in this plan. The plan also was developed in coordination the COMPASS' Long Range Transportation Plan, *Communities in Motion*.

The plan proposes a growth tier map that establishes distinct growth policy areas with applicable policies. It also establishes an on-going process to sustain effective interagency coordination required to effectively address the growth challenges faced in the County.

Phase 2, the Implementation of the Plan, has resulted in several efforts: (1) The re-organization of the Blueprint Consortium into COMPASS; (2) A process for establishing Areas of City Impact (approved by the Consortium in February 2008); and (3) a draft, but not adopted, adequate public facilities ordinance for transportation facilities (July 2008).

Vision for the Valley: A Strategic Plan of Action (September 2009)

Vision for the Valley is a Statesman editorial project designed to encourage the community -- and its leaders -- to make the decisions that will position the Treasure Valley for prosperity. What do we want the Treasure Valley to look like in the future? And what do we need to do to get there? Ten working groups, established after the initial Vision for the Valley work done by the "Group of 39" community leaders, set out to answer these questions and recommend specific actions they felt were important and achievable.

The vision is, "Working together, we believe the Valley can be the most innovative, prosperous and healthy community of our size."

To achieve the shared Vision for the Valley, a strategic plan with six Strategic Focus Areas with specific action items, owners, timeframes and help needed was developed. The six areas are:

- A vibrant and diverse economy.
- A well-trained work force.
- Safe and active neighborhoods.
- Lifelong learning and growth opportunities for all.
- A well-supported and flourishing arts community.
- A healthy and sustainable environment.

The plan also sets forth a timeline and actions over the next year for each of these six areas.

I. Examples from Outside the Region and Other Resources

1. Building consensus, creating the vision, and leadership (both the public and private sector)

Greater Phoenix Economic Council This group was formerly the Phoenix 40 that was made up of movers and shakers that was formed in 1975, and is now an economic development council. <http://www.gpec.org/>.

San Diego Smart Growth Map
<http://www.sandag.org/index.asp?projectid=296&fuseaction=projects.detail>.

Blueprint Sacramento <http://www.sacregionblueprint.org/>.

Dallas/Fort Worth <http://www.visionnorthtexas.org/main.html>.

Central Arizona <http://www.azonefuture.com/>.

Central Florida
[http://commerce.uli.org/Content/NavigationMenu/MyCommunity/RegionalVisioningandCooperation/FloridaRegionalCooperationInitiative/About the Florida In.htmVisi](http://commerce.uli.org/Content/NavigationMenu/MyCommunity/RegionalVisioningandCooperation/FloridaRegionalCooperationInitiative/About%20the%20Florida%20In.htmVisi).

Seattle - <http://realitycheck2008.org/>.

Envision Utah - <http://www.envisionutah.org/>.

ULI: Ten principles for Public-Private Partnership
http://www.uli.org/ResearchAndPublications/Reports/~media/Documents/ResearchAndPublications/Reports/TenPrinciples/TP_Partnerships.ashx.

APA Planners Press book *Downtown Planning for Smaller and Mid-Sized Communities*
<http://www.planning.org/apastore/Search/Default.aspx?p=3946>.

2. Understanding the Market

Colliers International *Year End Market Review* and *Retail Trends and Opportunities Review*
<http://www.colliersboise.com/>.

Thornton Oliver Keller, *Market Watch*. Market Watch is a semi-annual report covering commercial real estate trends in the Boise, Idaho metro area.
<http://www.tokre.com/webphotos/TOKemail/MarketWatch>.

Bill Ryan at the Center For Community & Economic Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension. *Downtown Economics*. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/Downtowns/ltb/index.cfm>.

International Downtown Association: <http://www.ida-Downtown.org/eweb/startpage.aspx>.

3. Reports on Downtown Revitalization:

Denver Regional Council of Governments. 2006. *Regulatory Strategies for Encouraging Infill and Redevelopment*. Denver, CO: DRCOG. PDF available online at <http://www.drcog.org/documents/TODRegulatory%20Strategies%20for%20Infill.pdf>.

Discusses regulatory assessments and improvements to encourage infill and redevelopment; looks at mixed-use zoning codes, overlay districts, and building codes.

Downtown Boulder BID Economic Vitality Committee and Progressive Urban Management Associates. 2003. *Downtown Boulder Business Improvement District Economic Development Initiative: Findings and Recommendations*. PDF available online at [http://www.boulderDowntown.com/files/docs/Economic Dev Report \(Jan 03\).pdf](http://www.boulderDowntown.com/files/docs/Economic%20Dev%20Report%20(Jan%2003).pdf).

Example of study looking at Business Improvement District as economic development incentive for Downtown.

Leinberger, Christopher. 2005. *Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute Metropolitan Policy Program. PDF available online at http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20050307_12steps.pdf.

Twelve issues to consider in planning for Downtown economic revitalization, including development of a strategic plan.

National Trust Main Street Center. 2009. *Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner's Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization*. Link to PDF of table of contents and ordering information at <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/main-street-news/story-of-the-week/2009/revitalizing-main-street.html>.

Table of contents provides view of information provided in this extensive guidebook, which must be ordered from the National Trust. Website includes supplementary online resources.

Ontario, Province of. 2007. "Managing Downtown Revitalization: Developing Your Strategy." Available online at http://www.redti.gov.on.ca/dr_developstrategy.htm.

Organizational and planning steps to guide a community through preparing a targeted, effective Downtown revitalization plan.

Pennsylvania Downtown Center. n.d. *Getting Ready for Downtown Revitalization*. Links to PDF available online at <http://www.paDowntown.org/programs/default.asp>.

Guide to implementing a Downtown redevelopment planning process based on the National Trust's Main Street program.

Shields, Martin, and Tracey Farrigan. 2001. *A Manual for Small Towns*. The Pennsylvania State University. PDF available at <http://www.ruralpa.org/Downtown.pdf>. Chapter 3 covers developing a revitalization plan.

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, Center for Community and Economic Development. "Downtown and Business District Market Analysis: Tools to Create Economically Vibrant Commercial Districts in Small Cities." Available at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/Downtowns/dma/index.cfm>.

This workbook walks through the market analysis process divided into three major parts: understanding market conditions, identifying market opportunities by sector, and developing market-driven strategies for revitalization.

4. Other Downtown Revitalization Resources:

Alexander Communications Group. 2009. "Downtown Research and Development Center." Available at <http://www.Downtowndevelopment.com/>. Clearinghouse for Downtown redevelopment information. Includes link to free e-newsletter "Downtown Digest."

Barman, Todd. N.d. "Developing and Retaining Business in Your Downtown." PowerPoint presentation, <http://www.commerce.state.wi.us/cd/docs/CD-bdd-BusinessInYourDowntown.pdf>.

Presentation from the WI Main Street program covers documentation of the Downtown economy, retention of existing businesses, and recruitment of complementary businesses.

Cornell University Department of Development Sociology, Community and Rural Development Institute. N.d. "CaRDI Toolbox: Mainstreet & Downtown Revitalization." Website available at http://www.cdtoolbox.net/mainstreet_Downtown_revitalization/index.html. Collection of articles on Main Street and Downtown Revitalization information.

National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2009. "Main Street." Website available at <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/>.

The Main Street Program takes a four-step approach to revitalization: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring, supplemented by eight guiding principles.

USDA Rural Information Center, National Agricultural Library. 2009. "Downtown Revitalization." Website available at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/Downtown.html>. Extensive list of online reports and guidebooks regarding rural Downtown economic development.

5. Sample Downtown Revitalization Plans:

Elizabethtown (NC), Town of. 2005. *Business and Development Plan for Downtown Elizabethtown, NC*. Prepared by Robert Murphrey, NC Small Town Main Street Program. PDF available at <http://www.elizabethtownnc.org/Downtown/DowntownEnhancementProject/Business%20and%20Development%20Plan%20Elizabethtown.pdf>. Observations and recommendations for 6 main economic development factors.

Hutchinson [MN] Downtown Association. 2003. *A Future Vision: A Revitalization Master Plan for Downtown Hutchinson*. Link to plan sections at <http://www.ci.hutchinson.mn.us/planning.html#Downtown>.

Kent Associates Planning & Design et al. 2005. *Houlton [ME] Downtown Revitalization Plan*. PDF available at <http://www.policyoneresearch.com/documents/Houlton%20Docs/Houlton%20Downtown%20Revitalization%20Plan%20April%202005.pdf>. Includes Action Plan Summary and implementation report for revitalization of the Downtown.

Marysville (CA), City of. 2004. *Downtown Marysville Economic Development Strategic Plan*. Links to plan sections available at http://www.marysville.ca.us/Community_dev.asp?did=35.

Includes assets/challenges/opportunities analysis; Downtown market analysis; vision; strategy for revitalization; and implementation section.

6. Other Resources

James W. Andre and Charles A. Long (2010) *Keys to Successful Mixed Use and In-fill Development*. Based on research conducted by ULI of hundreds of cities, this article published in “Western City” identifies the challenges and solutions for successful mixed use and in-fill development.

Dave Leland (2004) *Forum Getting Ready for Urban Centers* This presentation given to ULI Idaho describes what makes a Downtown successful; why many plans don’t get built; and tools and tactics for success.

John McIlwain, (2010) *ULI Housing in America: the Next Decade* looks at the challenges of the housing market today and the long term trends which are emerging.