



July 26, 2010

Dear Boise City Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Blueprint Boise. Idaho Smart Growth appreciates and commends the City for the work that went into creating this plan.

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Idaho Smart Growth brings Idahoans together to keep our communities vibrant and our landscapes healthy. We are a statewide organization, though the majority of our members are Boise residents.

In evaluating this plan, our review team kept in mind these 10 smart growth principles:

- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Mix land uses.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
- Adopt compact building patterns and efficient infrastructure design.

Overall, the City has done an excellent job with this draft, which incorporates many smart growth principles. Our team appreciated the way it focuses on promoting goals and policies for the future that reflect the smart growth principles. Blueprint Boise clearly articulates a strong commitment to being a sustainable community. There are a lot of great goals that now need a clearly articulated plan for how and when they will be accomplished.

Our team also commends the City on these specific points:

- Recognition this is a regional effort and how it is connected with other planning efforts.
- Commitment to measurable outcomes in ordinances. Page 2-22 is a great example about how the City intends to monitor progress and we encourage these types of measurements.

- Clearly linking land use and transportation.
- Encouraging pedestrian connectivity within the planning areas. Connectivity between existing neighborhoods, new neighborhoods, activity centers, and transportation nodes are clearly identified as goals.

We encourage the City to explore more partnership opportunities, especially with community based organizations and non-profits and to focus on improving the public outreach, communication, and involvement process regarding land use decisions. For example, the City should consider partnering with health care providers and other organizations to educate the community about how walkable neighborhoods create healthier communities and improved air quality. To promote local foods and community gardens, the City could partner with BUGS, the Idaho Botanical Garden, Think Boise First, or garden clubs.

Other general recommendations from our review team include:

- We suggest adding “encourage community or stakeholder collaboration in the development and redevelopment of these planning areas” for each area plan.
- The area maps need a little more detail- at the very least, the names of the streets that create the boundaries.
- We’d like to see more support and information on redeveloping brownfields.
- In order to have public support on this vision and the implementation through ordinances, public grassroots outreach will continue to be a critical component to an action plan and should be included in Chapter 5.
- We wonder if it is possible to limit brightness of neon and electric signs on new commercial structures.
- We’d like to see design flexibility that allows access for solar, wind generation, and geothermal options.
- It would be helpful to know what the schools are doing in terms of population- are they growing, are they shrinking, and is this being taken into consideration for future land use planning (driving development for families towards shrinking school population areas, for example).

We hope that the City will have the fortitude and funding necessary to realize the fine vision and goals outlined in the plan, especially in our current economic climate and we look forward to the critical next step of enacting ordinances to carry out this vision.

Below are more detailed comments, divided by Chapter.

Chapter 2

- Comments
 - 2-2- We support the goal “Preserve opportunities for urban agriculture” and the additional information found on 2-18 and in ES 14. The City might want to consider additional language, such as the following language used by the City of Greenleaf:

- Agricultural land needs to be preserved and protected. The “right to farm”, allowing for all aspects of the business, needs to be maintained. New land uses and their impact need to take existing land uses and ground water protection and its availability into consideration.
 - Protect and preserve high quality farm land within the City’s impact area.
 - Allow productive land area to be set aside by zoning procedures
 - Protect agricultural and wildlife management areas from undue adverse impacts from adjacent development.
 - Preserve and protect historically active agricultural land, special areas and natural resources.
 - Recognize that historically active agricultural lands of all soil types are a resource that is not renewable and must be protected.
 - Discourage the subdivision and development of historically active agricultural land.
 - Research and encourage programs that assist farmers to preserve open space on their land.
- 2-2- We support the commitment to a “predictable development pattern.” 2-2-In addition to partnering with utilities and regional agencies, the City should also partner with businesses, non-profits, and other organizations that work on these issues.
- 2-3- What is the strategy for protecting historic resources? Is there an inventory or will one need to be completed? What organizations will the City partner with?
- 2-4- It would be helpful to define what “Non-motorized transportation options” include.
- 2-12-ES 7.1 and 7.2- Ideally, these updates would be done in coordination with adjacent communities so that policies applying to the foothills and the Boise River are consistent throughout the valley.
- 2-20-ES 16.3- We support “Provide information on the role of Smart Growth and LEED for Neighborhood Development principles in the implementation of this comprehensive plan.”
- 2-20 ES 16.4- A demonstration project is an excellent educational opportunity.
- 2-10- The City may want to include the option of using grey water, xeriscaping, and edible landscaping in developments.
- 2-13- The City may want to consider passing a night sky ordinance.
- 2-15- The City should consider incentives to buildings meeting LEED standards.
- 2-17- ES 13.3- When removing barriers of CC &Rs, look for barriers regarding the use of grey water and clotheslines.
- 2-24- We strongly support the city’s commitment to incentives for infill development, including reducing impact fees. We support the other ideas

in this section as well, including identifying priority infill areas and the creation of a database.

- 2-26- We recommend adding language here about talking to current residents in areas of possible annexation.
- 2-27 We support the City’s commitment that “New growth will be encouraged only in areas where adequate public water, sewer, fire protection and emergency services, schools, transit, and roads are currently available or are planned.” This will help ensure that growth pays for itself without an undue burden on existing residents.
- 2-29- The first footnote to the title of Table 3 is confusing- are the policies part of the permit application process?
- 2-35- We support Goal NAC1: “Provide opportunities for residents to meet most daily needs within walking distance.”
- 2-38 Goal NAC5: Give all citizens the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of their neighborhoods.
- 2-46- We commend the City for their commitment to these principles: “Promote an integrated approach to land use and transportation planning; Expand the city’s non-motorized transportation options; Expand the city’s transit system; and Support technological and social connections.”
- We also support the introducing a flex car system, preserving the rail corridor expanding the cities non-motorized transportation options, and promoting active living (all ideas included in this chapter).
- We strongly support “ES1.4: DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS Promote compact, walkable development patterns that support transit and reduce carbon emissions from vehicles and discourage development patterns that rely solely on vehicles for transportation.”

Chapter 3

- Typos/edits
 - In first paragraph, write out “Area of City Impact” first, then abbreviate
 - 3-9, in the "Characteristics" section, the first line reads, "Regional Activity Centerss," with an extra "s" at the end of "Centers."
- Other comments
 - The design principles in this chapter incorporate many smart growth principles, including connectivity, walkability, and mixing uses, and are a strong foundation for the overall plan.

Chapter 4

▪ **Introduction**

- Typos/edits
 - 4-2- The goals and policy topic areas include “open space preservation” and “open space conservation” as 2 separate topics.
 - 4-2- The first sentence under “City Wide Context” has an extra period.
 - 4-2- Under “Employment,” St. Luke’s is noticeably missing.

- 4-4- Table 8- The data in the first column has some mistakes, as it doesn't add up. Our guess is that the West Bench number of "37137" is wrong, since it's hard to believe there are more jobs on the west bench than in downtown. But, if that is correct, then the total number of "37137" is wrong for Boise.
- 4-4 Both Tables- It would be really helpful to know how the data was used in your planning process.

- **Airport Planning Area Policies**

The airport chapter is good in that it builds from the recently completed airport master plan. There are opportunities in the Blueprint to link and expand efforts in some areas. For example, the environmental stewardship goals should include the airport facilities. Many airports have constructed solar and wind generators on their parking garages, terminals etc. If there are geothermal resources in the airport area they should be evaluated for use in the terminal. The heating system of the Stockholm airport is another model.

The airport has begun xeriscaping and should be encouraged to expand such efforts.

As noted the airport has not only air but also highway and rail connections. Given this infrastructure, the airport should be seen as and developed as a multi modal hub for both people and freight.

The potential for economic development with compatible uses such as aviation related businesses is great at the airport. Additional opportunities that could broaden the airports economic impact for the city include, the military (F-35, additional training for air and ground units) and with growing wildfire risks the possible expansion of NIFC.

Planning for the airport should continue to be done in coordination with the City.

Finally any development at the airport must be done in a way that it doesn't compromise air safety and the airport's primary purpose of serving aviation.

- **Barber Valley Planning Area Policies**

- Typos and edits
 - BV-2- The data under "Trends and Key issues" list 4346 households by 2025 and 4462 households by 2025. Which is correct?
 - BV-6-BV-CNN 1.2- In the last sentence, "nigh" needs a "t".
- Other Comments
 - BV-3- It would be helpful to include information about what is being done in potential flood areas and whether there is a floodplain management ordinance.
 - BV-12- We think the idea of an historic ranch interpretative center is great. An inventory of the local historical and cultural resources should be displayed at such a center.

- **Central Bench Planning Area Policies**

CB-CCN 1.3: Orchard Street Corridor: We support the promotion of rehabilitation of this area. Some of the newer office and multi-use buildings to the north are good examples of what kind and design and function could be seen all along Orchard. Vista Village is another good model.

CB-CCN 15: Vista Avenue Corridor: We support the conversion of existing homes to offices and businesses in appropriate locations. This can help reduce the need for new construction, infill, and will also aide in the salvage of homes and ease financial hardships for those properties.

CB-PSF 1.1: Priority Areas: Federal way to the RR tracks is considered an eyesore by some. Lights would be helpful for safety and a small portion could be a good option for pocket parks or small dog parks.

*General statement for Central Bench: It would be good to have less automobile congestion at stop lights in this area. One option would be to have more left turn lanes to become yield-on-left when the light is green. There seem to be many neighborhoods where the left turn lane has a red arrow, when there's no oncoming traffic.

This area has a wide diversity of stores and ethnic restaurants that could be celebrated and marketed to develop a strong sense of place for the community.

The City should consider whether this an appropriate area for the fuel farm, in regards to health issues, vehicle trips to the airport and back, and whether it could be relocated in a more industrial area.

This area could also use more bike paths and bike racks.

- **Downtown Planning Area Policies**

- Typos/edits
 - DT-10- DT-ED 2.1- Add “non profit organizations” to the list of businesses.
- Other comments
 - Page-DT-8-DT-CCN-2.3- We support the provision of incentives to promote the development of workforce housing.
 - Page DT-12- DT-c 2.5 (b) - We support the improvements to north-south for connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists across Front and Myrtle. This is an important connection, as it provides access to the Greenbelt, downtown, and locations like BSU that are south of the river. There is opportunity for improvement of pedestrian crossings around Capitol and Front, the Ada County Courthouse, and across Capitol to BoDo.

- DT-16- DT-NC 3.2- We support the goal of supporting the social service network in Downtown and encourage the city to consider providing incentives.
- We support “DT-NC 4.3: REVIEW PROCESS
Implement a collaborative multi-agency review process for Downtown projects that involves the developer, the developer’s design team, agency staff, DBA and other downtown neighborhood associations and community members in a continuing conversation as the project design goes from idea to conceptual design to design review submittal.”
- DT-18- Cultural organizations are not defined, so it is unclear what that includes, but we hope it includes the wide variety of non-profit organizations that contribute to the economy and vibrancy of Boise’s downtown. This point also applies to DT-19, under DT-ED 2.1 “Healthy Range of Economic Sectors,” which should include non-profit organizations.
- Since there are many overlapping planning entities in the Downtown, including the State of Idaho, Boise State University, and the Boise School District, we recommend coordination of planning to ensure the community vision is carried out in each planning effort.

- **Foothills Planning Area Policies**

The land use sections are well done. We didn't see any reference to Crane Creek Country Club or other such developments and think that they should be addressed as compatible uses. They not only provide recreational and economic activity but also open space and wildlife habitat.

We think the Firewise guidelines should be promoted, along with xeriscaping, possibly in conjunction with the Foothills Learning Center (which we didn't see mentioned).

The parks and police departments have done a reasonable good job of managing trail use, dogs etc. but it is likely that conflicts will increase as population and trail use increase and we recommend that the City be more proactive. For example, the area is gaining in popularity as a place to party which leads to trash, noise, fires etc.

- **North/East Ends Planning Area Policies**

- Typos/edits
 - NE-2, Parks and Recreation- The word “System” should be added after “Ridge to Rivers Trail”.
 - NE-3-At the top of the page, the drive to Bogus Basin would more accurately be described as 45 minutes (instead of 20).
- Other comments

- NE-6- Regarding NE-CCN 1.2: Overlay/Conservation Districts: This sounds like it could lead to the development of even more regulations, making development in existing neighborhoods more expensive and less attractive to developers. We encourage the City to consider incentives as additional tools which could be used to meet the same goals.
 - NE-6-Regarding NE-CCN 1.3: Infill Housing: Under (c), ensure that infill development is consistent with the neighborhood plans as well.
 - NE-9- Regarding Goal NEC1- The goal of “monitor the effects of development in adjacent planning areas on the North/East ends” is very broad and vague. This is repeated on NE-11 in NE-NC 1.3. What is the intention of this goal? How can it be translated into something measurable?
- **Northwest Planning Area Policies**
 - NW-2- If the area has 6.7 percent of the workers but only 2.2 percent of the jobs, it would be good to have a plan to increase the number of jobs.
 - NW-2- If 2 of the major corridors have a Level of Service of F, how will that impact future development allowed in the area? What is being done to address this issue?
 - NW-3- Are the two historic schools on the National Register? If not, perhaps this should be considered.
 - NW-8- It is good to see the community garden mentioned and good to know the plan is to preserve the rural character.

- **Southeast Planning Area Policies**

SE-CCN 1.2: High-Tech Expansion: Our review team suggested the city consider devoting this area to the development of renewable energy research/production.

SE-CCN 1.6: High Density Housing: We recommend extensions of the Greenbelt to these areas if possible.

SE-CCN 2.2: East Columbia District: We suggest including landscape techniques to protect developments, whether residential or otherwise, from range fires.

SE-C 1.2: Expanded Transit Service: This is important for this area, especially regarding a connection to Micron.

- **Southwest Planning Area Policies**

SW-CCN 1: The recommendations support a diversity of land uses and encourage working to retain open space and environmentally significant land areas.

SW-CCN 1.1: Designated Activity Centers: We suggest pedestrian safety improvements in the Overland and Five Mile intersection. It's such a busy intersection,

and with residential areas just south of there, it could be made safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

SW-CCN 1.2: Commercial/Retail: This could be a good area for more sports fields, playgrounds, trees and ponds, art displays, outdoor amphitheater, etc. which could better serve the neighborhoods.

SW-CCN 1.3: Clustering: We strongly support clustering in order to have more open space. Clustering will also enable more bus routes to this part of town, and create opportunities for walking and bike paths within the clusters. We also support encouraging a mix of housing types be introduced into planning area on a limited basis.

SW-NC 1: The Plan encourages the retaining the sense of place of rural southwest Boise through policies of inclusion of agricultural activities.

SW-NC 1: The Plan identifies goals to maintain and enhance the semi rural nature of Southwest Boise. However, like some of the other planning areas, there are conflicts between maintaining the rural nature of southwest Boise, and encouraging development within the planning areas.

SW-PSF: With the history of infrastructure in southwest Boise, the planning area policy outlines the need for public services and facilities to be available upon annexation. The policy is considered appropriate for this area of Boise. This policy is a means of encouraging compact development and reinforces the desire of the southwest Boise residents to protect their semi-rural lifestyle.

- **Ten Mile Planning Area Policies**

The recommendations in this Plan encourage and support providing a variety of transportation choices.

TMC-PSF: The Ten Mile Creek Planning area includes one of the most extensive set of goals and policies related to infrastructure. The goals include significant environmental goals related to protecting waterways, climate, energy use, public facilities, and sustainable energy standards. These policies and standards should be considered for use throughout the city of Boise.

TMC-NC: The Plan works to identify the environmental sensitivity of the area and encourages a development plan to protect the distinctive nature of the area.

- **West Bench Planning Area Policies**

- Typos/edits
 - WB-3-Bishop Kelly High School and St. Mark's School are missing from the list.
- Other Comments
 - WB-CCN 1: The Plan ignores an already established activity center at Fairview and Five Mile. Focus of a new

activity center location at Franklin and Five Mile seems misplaced given the industrial land use surrounding this location.

- WB-CCN 2: This does little to convey the concept of introducing or mixing the idea of live, work, play opportunities with the West Bench's neighborhoods and activity centers. Guidelines here reinforce continued single family housing and development. The Plan is limited in its recommendation for a mix of housing types. The plan recommends maintaining the already established traditional suburban nature of the west bench.
- WB-CCN 3: This does not recognize the need for retaining or recreating the small farms and ranches as the primary land use that was once dominant in this area of Boise.

Chapter 5

We support the identification of the priority action items to be completed as soon as possible. It is also important that the action items identified throughout the plan, especially within each of the planning areas, are included in an action plan. For example, DT-CCN regarding updating the downtown plans and consolidating them should have a timeline and work plan. All action items should be listed with deadlines.

We appreciate the effort to develop tools to measure and monitor progress and support the implementation of this item.

- Other comments
 - ES 1.2 should include social media elements as a way to reach more constituents.
 - ES 2.1 should include a section on local foods and local agriculture.
 - Under Parks and Open Space on page 5-3, there is an extra hyphen before the second to last sentence.
 - Action PDP-2 provides an excellent opportunity to partner with Idaho Smart Growth and the Urban Land Institute.
 - CEA 2.2 should better connect the City's sustainability goals with potential arts education initiatives.
 - EC 2.2 should include working with stakeholders and developers.
 - We strongly support the idea of conducting a sustainability audit as described in ES 5.1, Theme 2 of creating a "Predictable Development Pattern," and Action NAC-1 to develop tools to streamline the development approval process.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. Please feel free to contact me at 208-333-8066 with any comments or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Winer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Other review team members include:
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