



Idaho Smart Growth Strategic Plan 2014-2016

In the late 1990s Idaho was experiencing rapid population growth. In a 1997 US Census Report Idaho was ranked sixth among all states in the nation with the largest projected net increase in population from 1995-2025. Urban sprawl was taking over farms and open space and replacing it with housing developments miles from grocery stores and downtown centers. School districts were attempting to keep pace with new elementary buildings and major thoroughfares became Idaho's commuter highways. During this time of growth and expansion, Idaho Smart Growth emerged as a statewide organization dedicated to helping communities grow in ways that reduce sprawl and save money. Smart growth supports strong local businesses with schools and shops nearby, multiple transportation options and jobs that pay well; all facets of healthy communities.

Organization Purpose

Idaho Smart Growth is the only statewide organization working in the area where land use, transportation and community overlap. This includes promoting transportation and housing choices; encouraging compact, efficient development; conserving resources and open space; and fostering community collaboration and identity. We do this through education, advocacy and professional assistance. We work primarily with government agencies, landowners and developers, planners and designers, neighborhoods and the general public.

Benchmarks of Success

Our benchmarks of success (or long-term outcomes or goals) provide specific characteristics that can help us determine our effectiveness in successful implementation of Idaho Smart Growth's mission. These include:

- Communities utilizing Idaho Smart Growth's facilitation and technical assistance services continue to realize on-the-ground results.
- State, county and local policies and funding support diverse modes of housing, transportation and other land uses promoting social connections and the health of the community.

- Idaho Smart Growth is the recognized leader in promoting and celebrating the smart growth movement and positive impacts of growth and development.
- Idaho Smart Growth provides leadership to partnerships with diverse constituencies supporting the 10 principles of smart growth.
- Idaho Smart Growth is financially secure with the resources (people and funding) needed to effectively and efficiently implement its mission.
- The Board of Directors and staff consist of knowledgeable, highly skilled, passionate, innovative, flexible and committed members.

Measurable criteria are used to evaluate and monitor progress toward achieving the benchmarks of success. These criteria are incorporated in the annual staff and board work plans.

Core Services

Idaho Smart Growth utilizes the following key strategies/core services to implement mission and accomplish the vision as outlined within the benchmarks of success.

- Convening and facilitating people to assist them to create their community specific solutions.
- Leading and participating in advocacy and policy efforts relevant to significant land use and transportation policies, decisions and funding.
- Building partnerships and relationships to influence growth and development policies, decisions and funding.
- Providing technical assistance to communities including:
 - Expertise in best practices of and implementing principles of “smart growth”
 - Tools and training for creating sustainable solutions for growth.

The 10 Principles of Smart Growth that frame our work were formulated by the national Smart Growth Network. The set of principles is based on the experience of communities around the nation that have used smart growth approaches to create and maintain great neighborhoods:

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

Strategic Areas of Focus

This document will serve as a guide and management tool for the Board of Directors and staff during the next three years to assist decision-making relative to the allocation of resources and pursuit of new endeavors. Through review of information gathered specific to the strategic areas of focus and benchmarks of success, this tool helps ensure Idaho Smart Growth's continued efforts to bring people together to create great places to live. The initial areas of focus are drawn from the strengths and opportunities identified at the retreat (Attachment A) as well as later discussions in the board strategic task force meetings.

2014

There are three primary focus areas for this year. The staff work plan is based on continuing programs with existing funding and seeking additional funding for these three areas of focus:

- Organizational stability and capacity-building. This is exemplified in the strategic planning effort and the executive director transition.
- Moving Idaho Forward. This is an expansion of ongoing efforts to effect transformational change in transportation policy at the state and local levels.
- Healthy Communities. This builds on work underway with St. Luke's, Blue Cross, Saint Alphonsus, ULI and other partners.

In the spring of 2014 the board will have its board development workshop, leading to a board work plan. At that time the strategic plan, the staff work plan and the board work plan will be incorporated together and will help determine the strategic areas of focus for 2015-2016. Evaluation of the strategic plan will occur in July, 2014, in a "check-in" session led by plan facilitator Laurel Odell. Evaluation of the work plans will occur then, and again at the end of the year.

Attachment A

Strengths/Opportunities

A cursory environmental scan was completed by the board and staff at the retreat in the fall of 2013. Conclusions were drawn relative to strengths of the organization to be carried forward and opportunities to leverage, if possible, during the next three years. The top six strengths/opportunities to be carried forward included:

1. Continue working with communities convening stakeholders to develop community-specific solutions.

2. Leverage current transportation work (walkable/bikeable communities) to increase the capacity of the organization.
3. Continue to strengthen relationships with foundation funders and other key constituencies.
4. Maintain and support the expertise and commitment of the staff and board.
5. Expand revenues through fees, grants, sponsorships and other sources.
6. Create effective branding/messaging platforms.

Fig. 1: Strategic Plan Graphic View

