New spaces, new places

Since its founding in 2000, Idaho Smart Growth has worked out of the historic Sonna Building in downtown Boise. This year, with an eye toward efficiency and growth, we remodeled our space for the first time in 15 years! Made possible by the in-kind donations of design from architect and ISG board member Sherry McKibben, and construction from Sonna Building owner and ISG member Gary Benoit, our new light-filled office has better space for staff work areas, a meeting room and the ISG library. Come by for a visit!

Just as interesting spaces are important for efficient office work, they also are critical for a community’s economic development, and this year we expanded our work in placemaking, (see pages 2 and 5.) Placemaking is a process that helps communities build vibrancy and attract investment. We’re working with people in Idaho communities of all sizes who are trying to make places that their children will want to stay in, or come back to.

This report captures some of the highlights of our activities in 2015. As always, we are grateful for the commitment and support of people like you throughout Idaho. If you’d like to get involved or learn more about our work, please get in touch. If you haven’t already, consider signing up for our email newsletters and attending our programs and events around the state. We’d love to hear from you!
Thank you to all champions of smart growth across Idaho and beyond—volunteers, staff, board members, donors, funders and cheerleaders! Together, we continue to bring people together to create great places to live. And that’s not just a tagline, it’s our passion. As I reflect on the great year that was 2015, I am impressed with what we accomplished, and I’m even more excited about what is yet to come. As you will read in this report, we continued to work with our partners on Moving Idaho Forward—an effort to reshape the thinking about transportation funding and priorities. We engaged in first-of-their-kind place-making projects working with communities like Meridian to capitalize on the city’s assets, inspiration and potential through public spaces that promote health, happiness and well-being.

Smart growth is...a walk on the green-belt. A hike in the foothills. The choice to walk to school. Riding your bike to the grocery store.

Smart growth is...floating the river in the summer. Walkable neighborhoods. Housing choices. Accessibility for everyone.

Smart growth is...planning for our grandchildren. Planning for our aged. Sustainable for Idaho.

Idaho Smart Growth is a non-profit focused on creating great places to live. We work for all Idahoans to create great communities while zeroing out our books. Your past support is very much appreciated, and we count on your future support! Here’s to another wonderful year!

Kate is president of Idaho Smart Growth and is vice president and Idaho Area Manager at HDR.

Meridian Placemaking

Idaho Smart Growth teams with Project for Public Spaces to help identify sites for activation.

One of the ten principles of smart growth is to “promote distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.” To help celebrate a community’s distinct sense of place, sometimes we need to dig a bit to find it! This was the case in Meridian, which has experienced so much recent commercial and residential growth at its edges that people forgot there’s a downtown—one with with unique and interesting attributes. For this reason, Idaho Smart Growth teamed with the Ada County Association of Realtors (now Boise Regional Realtors, or BRR) to apply for a smart growth placemaking grant from the National Association of Realtors. BRR and ISG proposed to work with national placemaking experts at Project for Public Spaces to develop a placemaking plan for downtown Meridian, while at the same time giving ISG valuable hands-on training leading a placemaking project.

The PPS approach to placemaking is to help people collectively reimagine and reinvent their public spaces to build stronger communities and to “maximize shared value.” With the help of the NAR grant, ISG brought in Gary Toth and Philip Winn from PPS to develop a “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” placemaking action plan for downtown Meridian, available on our website at www.idahosmartgrowth.org/reports.

The project in Meridian involved working with people at the city, the redevelopment agency, the downtown business association, civic groups and residents. Workshop participants came up with 13 downtown sites with recommendations for possible action. Since then, local business leaders and other stakeholders have focused implementation efforts on one site: Idaho Avenue between 2nd and Main streets. We are helping the team build support and plans for creating parklets, temporary street “right sizing” and regular programmed events starting this summer. The goal from the LQC action plan is to build a vibrant street scene on this block that would attract more people and create connections between downtown, nearby large employers and the residential neighborhood east of 3rd Street. Stay tuned for updates!
Most of our work is in the intersection of land use, transportation and community development. Here are some of the year’s highlights.

Continued Moving Idaho Forward, our program for transportation policy change, as ISG and our partners the Idaho Walk Bike Alliance and Conservation Voters of Idaho Education Fund held meetings in all parts of Idaho. Our MIF work rolled into the New Mobility West program. (see p. 5.)

Cosponsored the second Creating Healthy Communities Summit in April with keynote speaker Jay Connor, talking about collective impact, and returning speaker and facilitator Tyler Norris. Over 300 attendees came together to learn about collaborating across sectors and how we can work collectively to create healthy communities. We continue to serve a role in planning and implementing the ongoing summit partnership.

Organized Neighborhood 2 Market, a project to encourage biking and walking for transportation, as part of Boise Bike Week.

Lobbied against state legislation that would eliminate a community’s ability to use eminent domain for nonmotorized transportation pathways. Despite widespread opposition from cities and advocates, the bill was passed into law.

Produced events and presentations, including James Corless of Transportation for America; Adventure Cycling, Project for Public Spaces, and others.

Delivered action plans from technical assistance projects to improve walking and biking safety and infrastructure in Ponderay, Kootenai and Blackfoot. With our support Blackfoot was able to add bike lanes to a 2.5 mile stretch of state highway through town. Kootenai and Ponderay are utilizing their action plans in future capital improvement planning.

Participated in Kootenai and Bonner County Community Review as part of Idaho Rural Partnership technical team for economic and sustainable development strategies.

Led our Transportation Choices Coalition to develop positions that impact state transportation funding discussions. The TCC supported increased funding for walking, biking and transit for Idaho and improved transportation policy nationally. The national FAST Act was approved with gains in transit, walking and biking. The state passed a bill with increased transportation funding overall, but not specifically for walking, biking and transit.

Presented on smart growth, transportation policy and land use issues to local and national workshops, civic groups, university classes and conferences. We had a significant presence at the Idaho Planning Conference in Sandpoint, including a fundraising event with Robert Liberty.

Continued working with interested communities around the state to improve the area of city impact process and policy. This year we made presentations and led discussions in Idaho Falls/Bonneville County, Valley County and Ada County.

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Idaho Smart Growth is a nonprofit 501c3 statewide organization dependent on a variety of funding sources to carry out our work. While we receive private foundation grants for our major programs, we rely on the support of nearly 350 individual members and sponsors. Increasingly, people like you who believe in helping communities choose responsible growth and development are critical to our efforts. Individual giving is the only funding source that allows us to respond quickly to opportunities or legislative issues as they arise in communities around the state. You may be able to claim charitable-gift benefits for your contributions; or you may deduct sponsorships with us as marketing expenses. Either way, you can be proud of helping build great places to live in Idaho!

For more information on supporting Idaho Smart Growth, contact Kate: 208-333-8066; kate@idahosmartgrowth.org.

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Andersen Construction, Tahoe Homes, LOR Foundation, Bullitt Foundation, National Association of Realtors; Idaho Power, Givens Pursley, HDR.
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Boise Hunter Homes, City of Sandpoint, Lucky 13, City of McCall, American Planning Association-Idaho Chapter, Bank of the Cascades; ISU School of Public Service, Harris Ranch, Northwest Integrity Housing.
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Idaho Smart Growth Core Strategies:
—Convening and facilitating for community-specific solutions;
—Leading and participating in advocacy and policy efforts in land use and transportation;
—Building relationships to influence growth and development;
—Providing technical assistance in smart and sustainable growth.

Thank You! We are extremely grateful to all our donors. Listed here are 2015 sponsors and individuals who gave $100 and above.
Transportation choices: people first

Moving Idaho Forward, our program for moving transportation policy and funding in Idaho toward enhanced multimodal mobility, is now in its third year. In 2015 we continued to work with part of the Sonoran Institute—now Community Builders—on their New Mobility West (NMW) project, a similar effort that provides support to create connected neighborhoods, vibrant downtowns and healthy economies in the Intermountain West. Our transportation choices work allows us to take a strong role in NMW in Idaho, and to help Community Builders and their team of experts from Project for Public Spaces and Charlier and Associates with their technical assistance here.

We worked in several communities around the state with our partners the Idaho Walk Bike Alliance and Conservation Voters of Idaho Education Fund. As part of the New Mobility West team we helped to conduct a charrette and produce a report on improving safety and travel for all users on the Highway 2/200 corridor in the Quad Cities of Dover, Sandpoint, Ponderay and Kootenai in Bonner County.

We also assisted our friends at the local FHWA office along with other partners in conducting a pedestrian and bicycle mobility safety assessment on Chinden Boulevard in Garden City. FHWA worked with all stakeholders including the city and ITD to develop an action plan to address the safety concerns and infrastructure deficiencies identified during the assessment. We will assist with the plan development and implementation as needed.

Planning for better growth

Careful planning is key to helping communities accommodate growth and development while ensuring that the growth provides real economic, civic and environmental benefits. If done well, planning can attract even better development. This year we worked with communities around Idaho to help them set up procedures to gain the most from new growth.

Conflicts can occur when growth happens outside of city limits and then the new inhabitants expect city-level services. Idaho land-use law encourages urban growth within cities while maintaining a rural character in the unincorporated parts of counties. Generally cities and counties are both economically healthier that way. We’re providing training and education to help people better understand and solve these area of city impact and annexation conflicts. In Idaho Falls, we presented a workshop and technical training to city planning and development staff, the mayor and council members, and people from neighboring cities and from Bonneville County. We’re also working with various government stakeholders in Valley County and in Ada County on similar issues.

We’ve been involved in other planning efforts around the state. We played a big role in the American Planning Association Idaho Chapter’s annual conference in Sandpoint, participating in several panels or leading sessions. We developed a directional signage plan for McCall’s bike/ped network and helped the city of Eagle with their comprehensive plan review. We began working with the cities of Dover and Bonners Ferry to update their comprehensive plans. We also were involved in maintaining professional planning education in Idaho: when Boise State University closed its new graduate planning program we helped the University of Idaho expand its program in Moscow and into Boise to fill the need.

Placemaking is a planning-related tool that can lead to more vibrant neighborhoods and communities. This year we led graduate planning students from Utah State University and local stakeholders in placemaking workshops for Boise’s Central Bench neighborhood and potential new development and future city park site. We also worked on a placemaking project with the developer and residents in Boise’s Harris Ranch neighborhood.
2015 Board of Directors:
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2015 Grow Smart Awards

The Grow Smart Awards is our program that recognizes exemplary application of smart growth principles in nominations from around the state. Around 150 people attended the November event in downtown Boise at the repurposed Owyhee, itself a winner in 2014.

The latest award winners are Belwood 301 Building, Sandpoint (Commercial Award), River Gardens at Taylor Crossing, Idaho Falls (Redevelopment), West Bridge, Garden City (Transportation); 27th Street, Main Street to State Street, Boise (Transportation); Surel’s Place, Garden City (Mixed-Use); Bandon River Apartments, Idaho Falls (Green Building); Communities in Motion 2040 (Planning); and Hillside to Hollow Master Plan, Boise (Citizen Advocacy). The 2015 Charles Hummel Award recipient was Nancy Chaney, former Moscow mayor, council member and longtime smart growth advocate. The Charles Hummel Award is given by the ISG board to recognize individuals who demonstrate outstanding personal integrity and commitment to smart growth principles.

This year we initiated a thorough review of the Grow Smart Awards program, with a task force of members of the volunteer jury of experts and professionals, ISG board and staff members and past nominees and winners. We also collected responses to a survey sent to ISG members, friends and anyone involved in the award program in prior years. We are analyzing results and are already implementing some improvements.

Boise’s foothills were the subject of planning and protection provided by the Hillside to Hollow Master Plan; Nancy Chaney (l) received the Charles Hummel Award, presented by Kate Eldridge.