Existing Conditions Report 2014

Addendum to the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan

City of Meridian

MERIDIAN IDAHO

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Existing Conditions Report 2014

City of Meridian

Addendum to the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan, by resolution No. 14-1011, on September 9, 2014

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1 Introduction

Review of the Report

In 2010-2011 the City of Meridian updated and reformatted its Comprehensive Plan (the Plan). The primary goal of the re-vamped Comprehensive Plan was to make it more useful for the community, City staff, and decision makers. One way the Plan became more useful, was to separate out key information about the City's history, present day conditions, trends, and current initiatives, from policy and future-looking initiatives. This separated information became the Existing Conditions Report, which allowed the Comprehensive Plan to focus on policy moving forward. The Existing Conditions Report is an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan.

Photo: Meridian City Hall

This Existing Conditions Report (Report) provides a framework for future decision making by detailing the current state, specific directions, and actions taken related to each topical area discussed. The Report takes the City's Mission, Vision, and Values and melds it with the City's Strategic Plan Initiatives, City department capital improvement plans, and the initiatives in the current Comprehensive Plan. While not policy oriented, this Report is also intended to aid in integrated decision making: i.e., decisions that are made regarding land use policy within Meridian, take into full account existing conditions within Meridian, and the impacts on transportation, housing, and economic strategies that current policies have had.

> "A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there."
> - H. Stanley Judd

To compose this report, existing information regarding Meridian and its Area of City Impact was gathered from many resources. This was accomplished by consulting with other agencies, individuals, and resources including existing plans, studies, and other documents. Some materials used in this report were provided directly by City staff, some information was provided by other affected local agencies and their publications, and some of the information was gathered using other resources like the internet. Where needed, City staff contacted key agencies and requested assistance in putting together this report. This report should be updated every few years, to keep information current and relevant.

Comprehensive Plan

Meridian's first Comprehensive Plan (Plan) was adopted in 1978. That first Plan was developed to meet the requirements of the 1975 Land Use Planning Act of the State of Idaho. During the summer of 1993, citizens representing neighborhood groups, developers, real estate professionals, and public agencies participated in a process to modernize the Comprehensive Plan, and was adopted on December 21, 1993. On November 3, 1998, the City of Meridian issued a request for qualifications to prepare the 2002 City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan. By June 1999, the process of developing Meridian's 2002 Comprehensive Plan had begun, and was adopted by City Council on August 6, 2002.

A significant amount of growth occurred after the 2002 version of the Comprehensive Plan was enacted. Additionally, new initiatives like sustainability and arts had become important considerations with important financial and quality of life implications, and also needed to be addressed. To ensure that the document continued to remain relevant and to make it more useable, City leaders began a significant overhaul in 2010. Surveys, workshops, steering committees, and social media sites were all forms of public involvement to solicit public input and ensure community support for an updated Plan. The goal was to make the Comprehensive Plan a more useful resource that the general public, developers and decision makers could all help implement in making Meridian's future the best it can be. The overhauled Comprehensive Plan was adopted on April 19, 2011, and has since been amended several times.

Local Land Use Planning Act

Section 67-6508 of Idaho Code (the Local Land Use Planning Act), requires Comprehensive Plans to consider, at a minimum: previous and existing conditions, trends, desirable goals and objectives, or desirable future situations for 16 planning components. This report provides an informative snapshot of the previous and existing conditions and trends in Meridian, Idaho regarding all of the State-required planning components. These components include: property rights; population; school facilities and transportation; economic development; land use; natural resources; hazardous areas; public services, facilities, and utilities; transportation; recreation; special areas or sites; housing; community design; agriculture; implementation; national interest electric transmission corridors; and, other components the City has deemed necessary to analyze. However, the desired goals and objectives for each of the 16 planning components are

Photo: Settlers Park on Meridian Road and Ustick Road

Photo: Generations Plaza on Main Street and Idaho Avenue

not part of this report. Rather, this existing condition report sets the foundation and background information to base a desirable future plan for the City. Implementation of policy related components are addressed in the Comprehensive Plan itself, and are not part of this report.

History[1]

The City of Meridian, Idaho which was incorporated in August, 1903, is one of six cities in Ada County, and is located on the western edge of the Ada-Canyon County border. Meridian, has transformed from a sagebrush-filled mail drop located on the Oregon Trail (Meridian was originally known as Hunter, after a railroad official along the Oregon Short Line route) in the 1880s, to a small fruit orchard center after the turn of the century through the 1930s, to a dairy-based farming community in the 1940s. Its character as a small farming community continued until approximately 1990, when its population was still about 10,000.

Since 1990, Meridian has experienced exponential growth that has changed both its character and appearance. From 1990 to 2007, Meridian's population grew from approximately 10,000 to approximately 65,000. Despite some slowdowns in housing starts and job creation during the 2008 recession, the population of Meridian continued rapidly increasing to an estimated population of 85,240 in 2014, according to the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho. This makes Meridian the second largest city in Idaho.

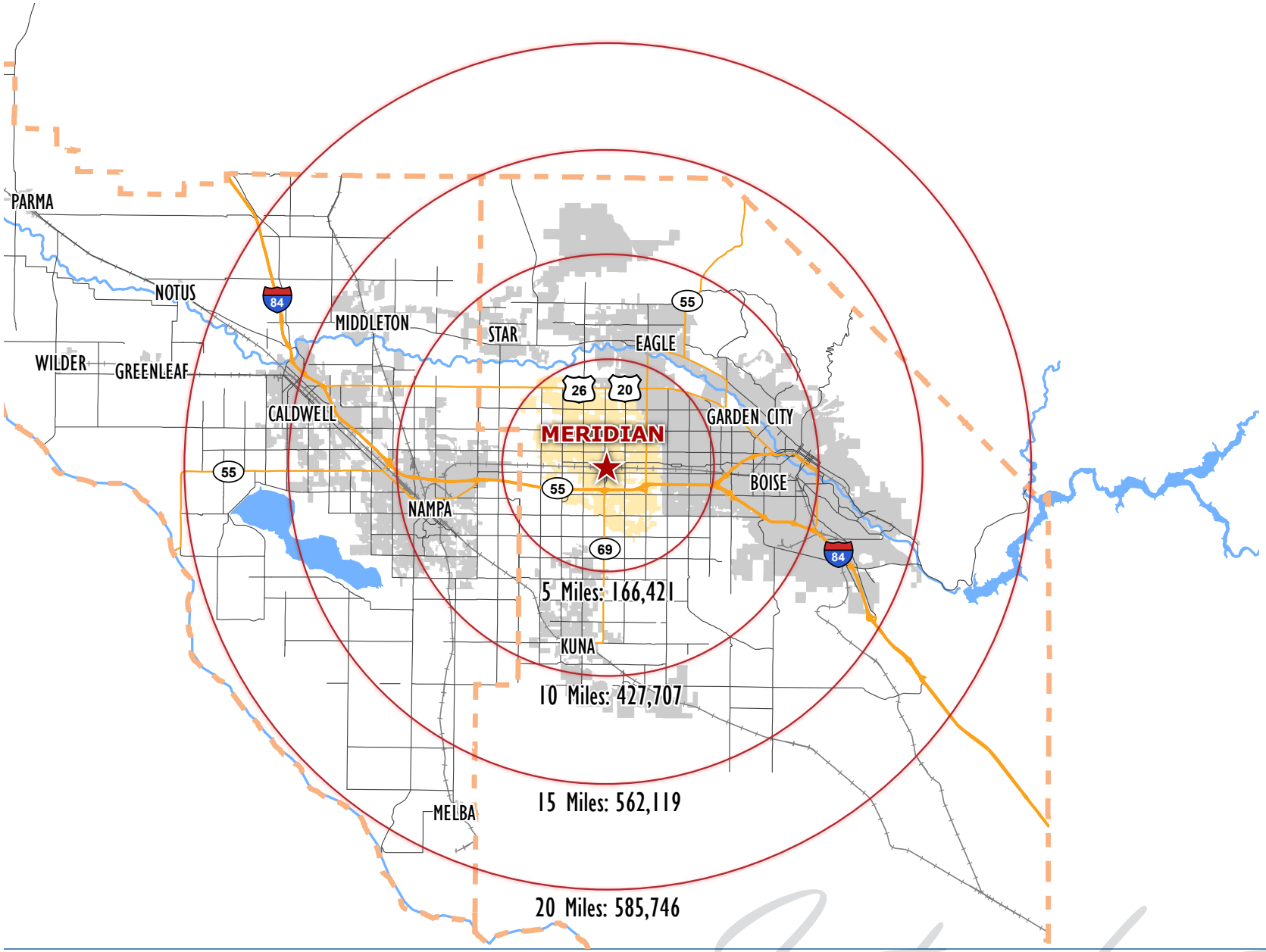
> "It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan."
> - Eleanor Roosevelt

With the increase in population, farms and fields have given way to residential and commercial development. Farm vehicles and feed stores have largely disappeared to be replaced with large residential subdivisions and commercial complexes. Today, several large office parks, new bank branches, restaurants, and major retail centers have sprung up throughout Meridian. St. Luke's has a major hospital located in Meridian, and a variety of medical service companies have come into the City.

To continue to provide elevated levels of service, City Departments and their service capabilities have grown. In 2002, a 30,000 square foot police station was constructed. With the increased growth since 2002, an addition to the police station is planned for construction in 2014. Fire Stations 3, 4 and 5 have all come on-line in the past 15 years. The

[1] For a comprehensive review of Meridian's heritage, see Meridian, by Frank Thomason and Polly Ambrose Peterson, Arcadia Publishing, 2010

FIGURE 1A: HEART OF THE VALLEY SHIFTS TO MERIDIAN



Source: 2013 Populations of Ada and Canyon Counties by COMPASS; map by City of Meridian 2014

Introduction

wastewater treatment facility in northwest Meridian has seen several additions, and it can now treat approximately 10.2 million gallons per day. The City currently boasts 240 acres of developed park land and nine pathways/segments. In 2008 Meridian completed a new three-story city hall building, which consolidated most City services. These are just a sampling of the new and expanded municipal capital improvements made in the recent past.

The transportation network looks substantially different than it did in 1990, or even 10 years ago. The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has and continues to widen and re-construct Interstate 84 through the Treasure Valley and a new interchange at Ten Mile Road was completed in 2011. New lanes and upgraded intersections were added along Eagle Road (SH 55) between Interstate 84 and Ustick Road, with more improvements planned for 2014 and 2015. Additionally, ITD began reconstruction of the Meridian Road and I-84 Interchange in 2014. The project will be completed summer of 2015. The new interchange will allow widening of the interstate underneath and provide more lanes over the top. Ada County Highway District (ACHD) road improvements, such as a freeway overpass at Locust Grove Road, Ten Mile roadway widening, and completion of the Downtown Split Corridor project, have helped to relieve congestion, but continued growth continues to put a strain on the transportation system in Meridian. Funding to not only maintain the existing roadways and bridges, but to expand the transportation network, will be critical to lessen the strain a growing community has on the transportation system.

Meridian is the population center of the Treasure Valley; people are evenly distributed in all directions from Meridian, with more than 160,000 people within 5 miles of downtown Meridian (see Figure 1A). Although airports, regional medical centers, cultural events and venues, and other urban services and amenities are all easily accessible, Meridian still values and embraces its agricultural heritage.

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Who Lives in Meridian? What Do They Do?

Population, Housing, and Economic Development

This chapter discusses characteristics of Meridian's demographics including population, gender, race, age, income, education, home ownership, and employment data. As required by Idaho State Statute §67-6508, analysis on Population, Housing and Economic Development components of the Comprehensive Plan are provided below. These three components set the foundation for consideration of other components later in this report.

Photo: Winter in the Woodbridge subdivision

The primary purpose of the population discussion is to look at past trends, current population totals, and future projections, along with characteristics such as age, race, and gender. Population inventories and forecasts are used to measure the demand for future facilities such as parks, water lines and roads, and for services such as police and fire protection. Forecasts can also be used by businesses to anticipate market demand and to locate service and commercial facilities.

> "When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people."
> Chinese Proverb

The primary purpose of the Housing element analysis is to evaluate the recent trends in housing and anticipate the future housing needs of the community. Past trends in housing and an inventory of current housing conditions provide specific information on residential use. The report assesses where people live and in what type of dwellings, as well as where they might want to live in the future.

The purpose of the Economic Development analysis of the chapter is to portray the business make-up and to analyze the local economy for strengths and weaknesses. This background information will be used to discuss how Meridian may expand its economic base and target specific industries. Employment trends and forecasts may also be used to determine if there is a need for additional land in particular zoning categories, and the demand for future levels of public services.

Demographics

TABLE 2A: HISTORICAL CENSUS POPULATION, CITY OF MERIDIAN

Year	Population	Average Annual Increase
1960	2,081	N/A
1970	2,616	2.6%
1980	6,658	15.5%
1990	9,596	4.4%
2000	34,919	26.4%
2010	75,092	11.5%

Source: COMPASS, Communities in Motion Forecasts 2040.

Population and Demographic Characteristics

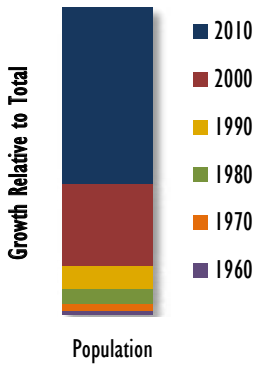
Historic Counts and Current Estimates

Meridian's population was fairly stable up to about 1990, when the City had a population of 9,596. However, in the mid-1990s, the City's population began increasing rapidly, reaching 34,919 residents by 2000, and then more than doubled to 75,092 by 2010. Table 2A tracks historical Census population data. In March of 2014, the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, or COMPASS, estimated the City's population at 85,240 residents. Table 2B tracks yearly population growth in Meridian, beginning in 2004.

While it did not grow quite as precipitously as Meridian, the two-county region as a whole also experienced considerable growth over the last two decades. Ada County grew from 205,775 residents in 1990 to 421,920 in 2014. Similarly, Canyon County grew from 90,076 residents in 1990 to 192,998 in 2014. The City of Meridian grew by 788% from 1990 to 2014 while the two-county region grew by 109.5% over the same period.[1] According to the US Census Bureau, in 2013 Meridian was number 10 in the top 15 fastest growing large cities, from July 1, 2012 to July 1, 2013.[2]

[1] COMPASS, Population Estimates by City Limits, 3/19/2014

Population Growth By Census Years



Note: See Table 2A for data.

TABLE 2B: RECENT POPULATION GROWTH BY MERIDIAN CITY LIMITS

Year	Population	Increased
2014	85,240	3,860
2013	81,380	3,090
2012	78,290	1,780
2011	76,510	1,418
2010	75,092	-198
2009	75,290	2,250
2008	73,040	1,174
2007	71,866	5,301
2006	66,565	10,457
2005	56,108	8,418
2004	47,690	5,209

Note: 2009 estimates were extrapolated from 2000 Census values and likely higher than in actuality.
Source: COMPASS, Population Estimates by City Limits Ada County, March 2014.

Forecasts

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, or COMPASS, is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Treasure Valley as designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation. As part of its Federal mandate, COMPASS prepares and periodically updates a regional long range transportation plan for the area. Part of that process is to monitor population growth and forecast future changes within the region.

COMPASS estimates that the population of Meridian will increase to 151,080 by 2040, an increase of 73.1% from today. This estimate anticipates that the county as a whole will increase by 65.7% to a total 674,317 residents in the same period. The official regional forecast from the 2014

[2] http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb14-89.html

TABLE 2C: COMMUNITIES IN MOTION 2040 VISION FORECASTS

Demographic Area	2013 Actual		2040 Forecast		% Change, 2013 - 2040	
	Population	HH	Population	HH	Population	HH
Meridian	87,275	29,145	151,080	55,632	73.10%	90.9%
Boise	244,595	99,388	328,292	145,465	34.20%	46.4%
Eagle	23,708	8,320	56,438	20,922	138.10%	151.5%
Kuna	18,567	5,849	50,992	19,812	174.60%	238.7%
Nampa	93,670	31,950	149,620	56,098	59.70%	75.6%
Ada County	406,850	152,794	674,317	272,044	65.70%	78.0%
Canyon County	192,990	64,856	347,683	127,375	80.20%	96.4%
Regional Total	599,840	217,650	1,022,000	399,419	70.40%	83.5%

Note: Demographic areas typically encompass larger geographic areas than city limits. Eagle Demographic Areas include: Eagle-Central, Eagle-Floating Feather, Eagle-Island, Eagle-South River, Eagle-State Corridor, East Foothills and West Foothills Source: COMPASS, February 2014.

version of the Communities in Motion plan estimates that the population of the two-county region will grow from 599,840 in 2013 to 1,022,000 in 2040, an increase of 70.4%. Table 2C provides 2013 estimates and 2040 forecasts of population and households in select Treasure Valley Demographic Areas.

TABLE 2D: AGE BY JURISDICTION

Age (years)	Meridian		Boise		Nampa		Ada		State		US	
Under 5	6.8%		5.6%		7.7%		6.4%		7.1%		6.3%	
5 - 9	11.6%		5.1%		8.7%		7.5%		7.4%		6.5%	
10 - 14	10.6%		7.2%		9.9%		7.6%		7.8%		6.6%	
15 - 19	6.9%		6.7%		10.0%		6.5%		7.1%		6.9%	
20 - 29	9.7%		16.8%		14.3%		13.9%		13.8%		14.0%	
30 - 49	30.3%		26.7%		25.5%		28.3%		24.9%		26.4%	
50 - 64	13.1%		20.0%		13.5%		18.5%		18.6%		19.5%	
65 +	10.9%		11.9%		10.5%		11.3%		13.3%		13.8%	
Age	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012
Median Age	30.1	32.8	32.8	36.4	28.5	29.7	32.8	35.4	33.2	35.2	35.3	37.4

Note: Margin of error results in values that may be greater or less than 100%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, 2000 Census & 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Please note that COMPASS demographic areas do not directly coincide with existing city limit boundaries.

Age

Meridian is generally a young community. Based on 2008-2012 American Community Survey data, as compiled by U.S. Census Bureau, the median age of Meridian residents is 32.8 years, which is slightly lower than the Ada County median age of 35.4. Median age is up slightly in Meridian from the 2000 census median age of 30.1, but still well below the median age of residents nationwide (37.4). Residents 14 years of age and younger comprise over a quarter of the City's population (29.0%). Retired and elderly residents (over the age of 65) make up less of the City's population, at 10.9%, which is up from 2008 estimates of 6.3%. Table 2D shows the age of residents in select Treasure Valley cities, as well as the State and Nation.

Race and Ethnicity

Table 2E shows the racial and ethnic composition of select subgroups within the Treasure Valley region. For comparison purposes, the table also includes the racial and ethnic characteristics of other boundary areas.

Meridian, Ada County and the State of Idaho are less racially and ethnically diverse than the nation as a whole. The majority of residents in Meridian are white (92.0%). An even higher majority, 93.2%, do not consider themselves Hispanic or Latino. These majorities in Meridian are slightly higher than in Ada County, which is also higher than the rest of the State. The exception locally is in Canyon County, where communities like Nampa have stronger Hispanic and Latino populations (over 20% in 2010), and a high percentage of residents that are of "Other" racial decent.

TABLE 2E: RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION BY JURISDICTION

Race/Ethnicity	Meridian	Boise	Nampa	Ada	Canyon	State	US
White	92.0%	89.0%	82.9%	90.3%	83.0%	89.1%	72.4%
Black or African American	0.8%	1.5%	0.7%	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%	12.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.5%	0.7%	1.2%	0.7%	1.1%	1.4%	0.9%
Asian	1.8%	3.2%	0.9%	2.4%	0.8%	1.2%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Other Race	1.9%	2.5%	10.7%	2.4%	11.4%	5.1%	6.2%
Two or More Races	2.9%	3.0%	3.2%	2.8%	3.0%	2.5%	2.9%
Hispanic or Latino	6.8%	7.1%	22.9%	7.1%	23.9%	11.2%	16.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino	93.2%	92.9%	77.1%	92.9%	76.1%	88.8%	83.7%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Census 2010.

Gender

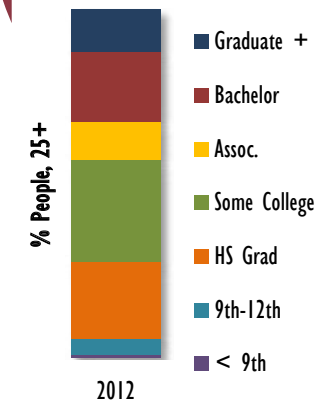
Based on 2010 Census estimates, there are 96.1 males to every 100 females in the City. This equates to a population that is 49.0% male and 51.0% female. The ratio of male-to-female residents roughly matches the 2000 census, when there were 96.4 males per 100 females.

Educational Attainment

Meridian as a community has maintained a high level of educational attainment relative to the State of Idaho and US for the last several decades. The percentage of Meridian residents 25 and older with a high school diploma increased from 92.2% in 2000 to 94.5% in the most recent American Community Survey (2008-2012). The percentage of Meridian residents from the same age group with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 27.0% to 32.3% over the same period, compared to State percentages of 21.6% in 2000 and 25.5% in 2012, and US percentages of 24.4% and 29.1% in the same years, respectively.

Table 2F summarizes the educational attainment of residents for select Treasure Valley jurisdictions, as well as the State and US as a whole.

Meridian Educational Attainment



Note: See Table 2F for data.

TABLE 2F: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY JURISDICTION (25 AND OLDER)

Level of Education	Meridian		Boise		Nampa		Ada		Canyon		State		US	
	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012	2000	2012
Less than 9th Grade	2.0%	1.1%	2.0%	2.4%	10.1%	6.3%	2.1%	1.8%	10.8%	7.5%	5.2%	4.1%	7.5%	5.8%
9th to 12th grade (no diploma)	5.8%	4.3%	6.9%	2.9%	12.9%	10.1%	7.1%	3.6%	13.2%	8.3%	10.1%	6.1%	12.1%	7.9%
HS graduate (includes equivalency)	26.7%	22.3%	21.2%	19.8%	29.0%	32.1%	23.1%	20.9%	30.3%	33.1%	28.5%	27.7%	28.6%	28.0%
Some college, no degree	30.4%	29.2%	29.2%	27.3%	26.5%	24.2%	29.2%	29.3%	25.3%	24.7%	27.3%	27.6%	21.0%	21.3%
Associate's degree	8.1%	10.8%	7.2%	8.5%	5.5%	6.9%	7.3%	9.1%	5.5%	6.8%	7.2%	9.0%	6.3%	8.0%
Bachelor's degree	21.1%	20.0%	23.0%	24.9%	11.5%	14.7%	21.7%	22.8%	10.3%	13.7%	14.8%	17.3%	15.5%	18.2%
Graduate or professional degree	5.9%	12.3%	10.6%	14.3%	4.5%	5.8%	9.5%	12.5%	4.6%	5.9%	6.8%	8.2%	8.9%	10.9%
Percent HS Grad or Higher	92.2%	94.6%	91.2%	94.7%	77.1%	83.6%	90.8%	94.6%	75.9%	84.2%	84.6%	89.8%	80.4%	86.4%
Percent Bachelor's or Higher	27.0%	32.3%	33.6%	39.2%	16.1%	20.5%	31.2%	35.3%	14.9%	19.5%	21.6%	25.5%	24.4%	29.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, 2000 Census & 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

TABLE 2G: COMPARATIVE COST OF LIVING INDEX, COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Metro-Area	Composite Index	Grocery Items	Housing	Utilities	Trans	Health Care	Misc. Goods & Services
Boise, ID	94.1	86.9	86.3	89.7	103.4	103.9	100.1
Anchorage, AK	125.3	113.7	151.8	97.9	107.7	135.8	122
Colorado Springs, CO	95.7	92.5	94.7	99.9	96.5	102.4	95.2
Reno-Sparks, NV	90	90.5	87.8	73.6	105.7	94	90.3
Spokane, WA	95.3	90.8	88.2	94.3	100.4	106.4	99.8
Provo-Orem, UT	95.3	88.1	86.1	90	111.1	93.9	101.7
National Average	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Council for Community and Economic Research, 2013 C2ER Cost of Living Index, Comparative Data for Urban Areas, March 21, 2014.

Cost of Living

The Council for Community and Economic Research prepares comparative cost of living data annually for urban areas across the U.S. The results comprise a relative cost of living index for each participating metropolitan area based on "expenditure pattern for executive households in the top income quintile." The average of all participating localities is the baseline index value of 100, so categorical and composite values can be gauged as a percent of the "norm" or U.S. average based on available data.

The index has certain limitations. For example, it does not calculate variations in tax structure and subsequent burdens from one locality to another. It also does not factor in cost differences between sub-metropolitan area jurisdictions (a single value for housing, for example, is assigned to the entire Boise City-Nampa metro area). Spending patterns for the top income quintile are also not reflective of all metro area residents. Still the Council for Community and Economic Research Cost of Living Index is the most comprehensive and straightforward annual comparison of different metro areas of which the City is currently aware.

Table 2G lists comparative costs of living for metro areas in the northwest region of the United States. The average of all participating metro areas for both categorical and composite values is 100.

Within the Boise metro area, grocery items, housing, and utility categories all differ significantly from the rest of the United States. The overall cost of living in the Boise metro area does not however deviate substantially from the national average, or from metro areas of similar size within the region.

Income

Meridian is a relatively affluent community with a median household income greater than that at the County, State, and national level. Based on the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, and with the exception of the City of Eagle, Meridian had the highest median household income of any jurisdiction in the Treasure Valley. Median household income did not grow quite as quickly in Meridian as it did nationally from 2000 to 2012, but still remained over 20% above the national median.

The State of Idaho remains roughly 11% below the national median for household income. Table 2H provides median

TABLE 2H: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	2000 Income	%US 2000 Median	2012 Income	%US 20112 Median	% Change 2000-2012
Meridian	53,276	126.9%	64,107	120.9%	20.3%
Boise	42,432	101.0%	49,182	92.7%	15.9%
Eagle	65,313	155.5%	80,324	151.4%	23.0%
Kuna	40,617	96.7%	52,542	99.0%	29.4%
Nampa	34,758	82.8%	40,835	77.0%	17.5%
Ada	46,140	109.9%	55,499	104.6%	20.3%
Canyon	35,884	85.5%	42,691	80.5%	19.0%
Idaho	37,572	89.5%	47,015	88.6%	25.1%
US	41,994	100.0%	53,046	100.0%	26.3%

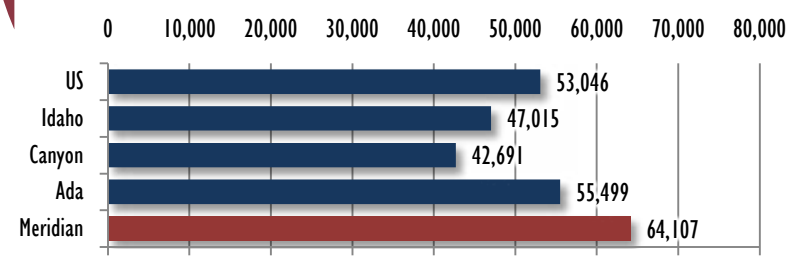
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Census 2000 & 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

household incomes for select Treasure Valley communities and the State of Idaho, relative to the U.S. median. It also indicates the percent change in median household income from the 2000 census to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Poverty

Poverty is determined by using income thresholds for a household of a given size. According to the 2008–2012 American Community Survey, 7.3% of the population in Meridian is considered to be living in poverty. This is considerably lower than the national rate of 14.9%. As indicated in Table 2I, the cities of Meridian and Eagle are the only local jurisdictions with less than 10% of the local population living in poverty, and which also increased less than 2% since 2000. In general though, poverty levels have increased faster in the Treasure Valley and Idaho than the national average.

Median Household Income Comparisons



Note: See Table 2H for data.

The 2008–2012 American Community Survey data reveals a higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino and non-white residents living in poverty in the Treasure Valley. While 7.3% of Meridian's overall population is living in poverty at the time of the survey, 11.9% of Hispanic and Latino residents are living in poverty. In Ada County, the rate for Hispanic and Latino residents living in poverty is significantly higher, at 27.2%. Countywide, 11.4% of "White" residents are living below the poverty level while 20.8% of "Black or African American" residents, 20.3% of "Asian" residents, 25.0% of residents of "Some other race," and 19.5% of residents of "Two or more races" are living below the poverty level.

It is important to note that 2008-2012 American Community Survey data does not necessarily reflect all recovery improvements since the economic recession. It is possible that the number of individuals living in poverty may now (2014) be different.

Although the percentage of Meridian residents living in poverty is significantly lower than most neighboring communities, the City is still taking steps to provide assistance to those in need. One example is a coordinated effort with El Ada Community Action Partnership to provide utility bill assistance to impoverished residents through the Meridian Cares Program. Funded with City enterprise revenues, Meridian Cares allows residents living at or below the poverty limit to receive up to $100.00 per year to pay City utility bills (water, sewer, and trash). The program avoids service interruptions

TABLE 2I: NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY

Jurisdiction	2000		2012		2000 to 2012
	Number	%	Number	%	% increase
Meridian	1,926	5.6%	5,442	7.3%	1.7%
Boise	15,310	8.4%	30,051	14.7%	6.3%
Eagle	425	3.8%	1,116	5.6%	1.8%
Kuna	774	14.2%	2,232	14.7%	0.5%
Nampa	6,307	12.4%	17,614	22.0%	9.6%
Ada	22,471	7.7%	47,081	12.2%	4.5%
Canyon	15,438	12.0%	36,459	19.6%	7.6%
Idaho	148,732	11.8%	231,604	15.1%	3.3%
US	33,899,812	12.4%	44,852,527	14.9%	2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2008–2012 American Community Survey & Census 2000.

that would otherwise make a housing unit substandard (no water, for example).

The Meridian Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program includes a number of other initiatives to help the underprivileged. The City, through its CDBG program, enjoys an ongoing partnership with the Meridian Food Bank by providing grant funds which the Food Bank uses to purchase food to distribute to those in need. The City also partners with the Ada County Housing Authority and Neighborhood Housing Services to provide down payment and closing cost assistance for low-moderate income home buyers. Through this partnership, the City use CDBG funds to assist multiple low-income buyers achieve home ownership in affordable housing units. In addition, the City pursues public facility improvements to parks, pathways, and other community improvements in low to moderate income areas to ensure that, regardless of income, Meridian residents have access to quality public amenities.

Housing Characteristics

The City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan supports and encourages a variety of housing types ranging from large single-family detached homes to multi-family dwellings. Future Land Use designations allow the City to integrate a range of residential unit densities, from the very low Rural/ Estate Residential to High Density Residential. These land uses and other supportive policies are intended to ensure opportunities exist for a variety of incomes, housing preferences, lifestyles, family sizes, and age groups.

Number of Dwelling Units

COMPASS monitors regional growth in part by tracking building permit data for each jurisdiction in the Treasure Valley. They publish the results regularly in the Development Monitoring Report (DMR), which provides a wealth of information about residential and commercial building activity in the region.

In Meridian, the growth in housing stock has paralleled the pace of growth in population. As shown in table 2J, in 2000 there were 12,293 total housing units in Meridian, and by 2010, there were 27,007. In 2013 the total increased to 29,861, housing units. Each year since 2008, new residential construction in Meridian has comprised 27.7%, or more, of total residential unit construction, in both Ada and Canyon counties.

TABLE 2J: MERIDIAN HOUSING UNITS BY YEAR

Jurisdiction	2000 (Census Total)	2010 (Total)	2011 (New)	2012 (New)	2013 (New)	Grand Total
Meridian	12,293	27,007	521	1,041	1,292	29,861

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Census 2000; COMPASS, 2013 Development Monitoring Report. Based on City Limits.

TABLE 2K: HOUSING UNITS BY JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	2000	2010	2010-2013	Total
Meridian	12,293	26,534	3,360	29,894
Boise	77,850	87,960	2,421	90,381
Eagle	4,048	7,011	778	7,789
Garden City	4,590	5,439	67	5,506
Kuna	1,793	5,010	387	5,397
Star	681	2,116	460	2,576
Ada County Unincorporated	17,261	26,225	748	26,973
Ada County Total	118,516	160,295	8,222	168,517
Canyon County Total	47,965	70,628	2,572	73,200
Regional Total	166,481	230,923	10,794	241,717

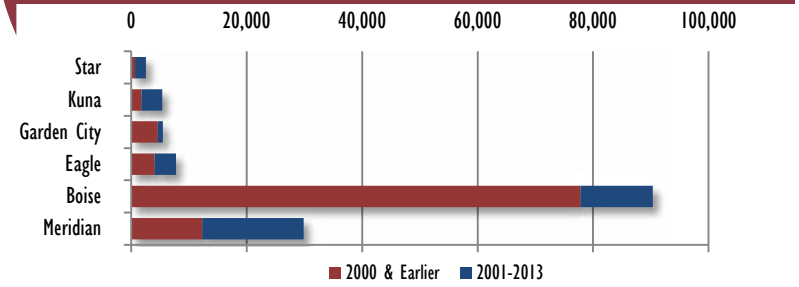
Note: Variation in housing unit totals between tables are the result of variations in Census reporting for mobile and manufactured housing. Source: COMPASS, February 2013.

Table 2K reports the total number of housing units by jurisdiction, and in the two-county region, in and since 2000.

Housing Unit Type

Meridian's population is distributed throughout the community primarily in suburban-style developments, comprised of mostly detached single-family housing units. Increasingly however, higher density housing is being constructed throughout the community, particularly near employment areas, major roadways, and regional attractions. As shown in Table 2L, in 2000, more than 10,464 housing units in Meridian (85.3% of all units) were traditional single-family units. The remaining 1,800 units (14.7% of all units) were multi-family housing units. Based on the 2000 Census and building permit data compiled by COMPASS from 2000 to 2013, there are now 3,973 multi-family housing units in Meridian. This constitutes 13.3% of the City's 29,802 housing units (not including mobile or manufactured homes).

Comparison of New Housing Units to Total by Jurisdiction



Note: See Table 2K for data.

TABLE 2L: MERIDIAN HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE

Housing Type	2000		2009		2013	
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	Number	% Total
Single Family	10,464	85.30%	23,279	88.00%	25,829	86.67%
Multi-Family	1,800	14.70%	3,173	12.00%	3,973	13.33%
TOTAL	12,264	100.00%	26,452	100.00%	29,802	100.00%

Note: Mobile and manufactured homes are not included. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 COMPASS, February 2013 Building Permit Data.

The City realizes that an increasingly larger percent of the population is of the 55-plus population group, and that there is an increased need for senior housing opportunities. There is a growing demand for non-single-family detached dwelling units, that are easier to take care of and closer to activities and services.

Occupancy

In 2000 Meridian contained 12,264 housing units, as shown in Table 2L. As shown in Table 2M, 85.7% of those units were owner occupied, with 14.3% being renter occupied. According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey data, the ratio of housing units occupied by owners to renters in Meridian is 75.5% to 24.5%. This is slightly higher than the 68.1% to 31.9% ratio in Ada County as a whole. There has been a notable increase in renter occupied housing throughout

TABLE 2M: HOUSING OWNERSHIP RATES BY JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	2000			2012		
	Owner	Renter	Vacancy	Owner	Renter	Vacancy
Meridian	85.7%	14.3%	3.8%	75.5%	24.5%	5.7%
Boise	67.7%	32.3%	4.4%	60.8%	39.2%	6.2%
Eagle	85.5%	14.5%	4.5%	81.8%	18.2%	5.7%
Kuna	87.0%	13.0%	3.7%	82.8%	17.2%	2.7%
Nampa	70.3%	29.7%	6.7%	66.0%	34.0%	8.5%
Ada	74.0%	26.0%	4.3%	68.1%	31.9%	6.0%
Idaho	74.1%	25.9%	11.0%	70.1%	29.9%	13.4%
US	68.7%	31.3%	9.0%	65.5%	34.5%	12.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, 2000 Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

the valley since 1990, especially in Meridian, when owner occupied units were at 96%.

Table 2M also shows vacancy rates at the local, state, and national level in 2000 and 2012. The percentage of vacant housing units is significantly lower locally than State and National averages.

Persons per Housing Unit

The 2008-2012 American Community Survey reports that there were 2.58 persons per household in Ada County and 2.61 for the nation as a whole. That rate was slightly higher in Meridian, at 2.88 residents per household in 2012. The City of Kuna had the highest rate in the region with 3.26 persons per household. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the City of Boise averaged only 2.38 persons per household.

Age of Housing

Fitting for the level of growth in the last two decades, the housing stock in Meridian is collectively newer than in most communities, both locally and statewide. Table 2N shows 82.1% of housing units in Meridian as constructed since 1990, compared to about 50% in Ada County as a whole. This percentage of new housing stock in Meridian is almost twice as high as the State average of 42.5%.

The City of Boise has the oldest housing stock of the Treasure Valley cities. Roughly half of Boise's housing units (50.3%) were constructed before 1980 (compared to only 9.7% in Meridian). Table 2N provides the age of housing units in select Treasure Valley Communities, and at the statewide level.

Housing Value

Despite the recession that began in 2007/2008, the 2008-2012 American Community Survey reports that overall median housing values increased throughout the area between 2000 and 2012. Table 2O summarizes the change.

In 2000, the Meridian median value of an owner-occupied housing unit with a mortgage was $121,200. The 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates released in December of 2013, indicated that the median value of owner-occupied housing units with mortgages increased to $178,100, a 46.9% increase in twelve years. County wide, increases were slightly lower at 35.1%, and statewide increases were comparable to Meridian at 45.3%. Another more local source of housing data which captures actual selling prices of homes in Meridian is the Intermountain Multiple Listing Service (MLS). MLS tracks trends in the local housing market,

TABLE 2N: AGE OF HOUSING UNITS BY JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	Since 2000	1990 - 1999	1980 - 1989	1960 - 1979	1940 - 1959	Before 1940
Meridian	54.0%	28.1%	8.3%	7.6%	1.7%	0.4%
Boise	13.4%	22.9%	13.3%	31.3%	13.1%	5.9%
Nampa	32.8%	25.6%	7.6%	17.2%	11.0%	5.8%
Ada	27.9%	23.4%	11.4%	24.4%	8.5%	4.4%
Idaho	24.2%	18.3%	10.4%	26.5%	11.7%	9.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

TABLE 2O: VALUE OF HOUSING

Subject	Meridian			Boise			Nampa			Ada			Idaho		
	2000	2012	% Change	2000	2012	% Change	2000	2012	% Change	2000	2012	% Change	2000	2012	% Change
Less than $50,000	0.2%	1.5%	x	0.7%	5.0%	x	3.7%	8.2%	x	0.6%	3.7%	x	5.3%	7.1%	x
$50,000 to $99,999	19.2%	4.6%	x	28.5%	9.3%	x	62.1%	41.0%	x	24.6%	10.3%	x	39.9%	16.3%	x
$100,000 to $149,999	57.2%	24.6%	x	42.2%	25.3%	x	27.1%	31.4%	x	42.4%	25.4%	x	32.0%	24.4%	x
$150,000 to $199,999	17.6%	32.9%	x	14.6%	22.7%	x	4.8%	8.7%	x	16.4%	22.8%	x	11.9%	19.7%	x
$200,000 to $299,999	5.1%	24.5%	x	10.1%	22.8%	x	1.5%	7.4%	x	11.0%	21.9%	x	7.3%	18.5%	x
$300,000 to $499,999	0.6%	9.7%	x	3.1%	11.2%	x	0.8%	3.3%	x	3.9%	12.3%	x	2.5%	9.9%	x
$500,000 to $999,999	0.0%	1.8%	x	0.7%	3.5%	x	0.0%	0.0%	x	1.0%	3.2%	x	0.8%	3.2%	x
$1,000,000 or more	0.0%	0.4%	x	0.1%	0.2%	x	0.0%	0.0%	x	0.2%	0.4%	x	0.3%	0.8%	x
Median (dollars)	121,200	178,100	46.9%	120,700	167,000	38.4%	92,200	101,300	9.9%	124,700	168,500	35.1%	106,300	154,500	45.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, Census 2000, 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

and their data better illustrates effects of the recent recession, and recovery. Table 2P presents the annual average of monthly median sale price for homes in the four Meridian MLS sub-areas. As Table 2P illustrates, overall median sales prices fell between 7.91% and 19.91% in Meridian between 2007 and 2013. However, since 2010 sale prices have increased between 22.90% and 32.00%. While overall home sales prices have fallen since 2007, there has been substantial increases since 2009.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has determined that any household paying more than 30% of its income for housing is paying an excessive percentage of their income for housing[3]. Historically, 19.2% of Meridian homeowners have spent 30% or more of their household income on their mortgage (2000 Census). According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, this percentage rose dramatically to 32.7% of homeowners spending 30% or more of their household income on their mortgage. The same data indicates that in 2000, 40.3% of renters spent 30% or more of their household income on rent, and rose to 48.4% of renters in 2012.

TABLE 2P: HOUSING MEDIAN SALES PRICE BY MERIDIAN MLS

MLS Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013*	% Change 2007 — 2013	% Change 2010 - 2013
Southeast Meridian - 1000	277,500	240,000	198,000	178,860	185,000	215,000	227,950	-17.9%	27.4%
Southwest Meridian - 1010	370,000	350,000	250,000	216,125	265,000	251,900	285,300	-22.9%	32.0%
Northeast Meridian - 1020	272,500	214,000	169,000	167,500	160,000	180,533	210,000	-22.9%	25.4%
Northwest Meridian - 1030	229,900	200,000	165,000	155,000	144,900	166,500	190,500	-17.1%	22.9%

Source: Intermountain Multiple Listing Service, Yearly Reports, 4/7/2014.

[3] http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing

Housing and Urban Development

The City of Meridian became an Entitlement Community as designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the fall of 2006. With the Entitlement Community designation, the City receives formula funds annually through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Generally, the City receives approximately $250,000 each year through the Program. Planning Division Staff administer the CDBG Program.

The purpose of the CDBG Program is to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low-and moderate-income persons. The City funds a variety of activities to meet that end, with several recent examples including:

1. Homeownership assistance
2. Clearance of dilapidated, dangerous, and blighted properties
3. Meridian Food Bank assistance
4. Boys & Girls Club transportation funding
5. Infrastructure design in targeted areas
6. Community amenity improvements such as parks and pathways
7. Code enforcement activities in Old Town
8. All-Abilities Playground at Meridian Elementary School

Photo: All-Abilities Playground at Meridian Elementary School

The overall direction of the City's CDBG Program is established by the City Council in the Consolidated Plan, which identifies high-level goals and objectives for the five year interval covered by the Consolidated Plan. Activities the City will undertake are then detailed in annual action plans, which the City prepares and submits to HUD each year. Community input was an important component of the five-year plan, and was adopted in July 2012.

Photo: Looking towards the cinema in the Village at Meridian

Economic Development

Meridian seeks to be a vibrant community whose vision is to be the premier city to live, work and raise a family. Fundamental to this vision is a strong and diverse business community that is "Built for Business and Designed for Living."

With a vibrant and diverse economic environment, Meridian is home to some of the region's top employers such as Blue Cross of Idaho, Crucial Technology, Western Electronics, Food Services of America, United Heritage, and T-Mobile. As home to many high-tech employers, technology investment is increasingly important to the region. Overall, sense of community combined with a low cost of doing business, strong leadership, and a highly educated and dynamic workforce has led to Meridian's success. Indeed, the Boise Valley and Idaho consistently rank among the best areas in business friendliness, cost of living and overall cost of doing business.

Families want to work where they live and live where they work. To address that need, Mayor Tammy de Weerd has identified growing family wage jobs as one of her top five priorities and is working toward that end. Over the past several years, the Economic Excellence Team along with the Mayor have visited hundreds of business owners to help identify industries and service sectors that would be beneficial to the community and to businesses bottom-line. The focus on value added jobs will be delivered through strategic Business Enterprise Areas. In addition, Meridian's solid partnership with the educational institutions in our area, creates a solid foundation for success. Companies that provide family wage jobs require educated workers, and Meridian continues to see an expansion of programs offered to create a highly educated workforce.

The City realizes that the 21st century economy requires flexibility. Over the last several decades, Meridian has evolved from a primarily agricultural-based economy to one increasingly based on innovation and creativity. The City is striving to strengthen its competitive position by creating an environment and infrastructure where industries can create, respond, and adjust rapidly. Several of the goals, objectives and action items contained in the City's Comprehensive Plan are meant to improve economic prosperity by ensuring that the economy grows in ways that strengthen industries, retain and create good jobs across a variety of sectors, increase average income, and stimulate economic investment in the community. A strong and diverse economy provides the financial support and stability for Meridian residents that will ensure that public facilities, services, and quality of life are superior.

Economic Excellence

The Boise Valley has been discovered and is recognized nationally as a destination to locate business and family. To that end the City has established an Economic Excellence team. Economic Excellence staff members, part of the Mayor's Office, can work one-on-one to identify resources from starting, expanding, or relocating a business to Meridian. Staff can assist businesses in all aspects of operating in Meridian, including providing assistance with available property locations, incentives and business programs, City processes and development coordination, and other information. Whether the company is a start-up or a world class corporation, the Economic Excellence staff can help it thrive in today's economy.

Economic Development and Infrastructure

The City recognizes the need for infrastructure to be in place (or readily available) if it is going to attract large employers. Infrastructure needs vary depending on the user, but typically roads, sewer and water, electric utility facilities, as well as easy access to the highways and railroad, are key factors in determining when and where a business chooses to locate or expand. Therefore, the City has taken, and will continue to strive to provide sufficient infrastructure to support all types of businesses. The City has partnered with Idaho Power Company, to plan for possible transmission and substation facilities to accommodate large load requests. The City works with ACHD and ITD to ensure that highways, bridges and intersections are in good repair and can accommodate traffic. The City's Public Works Department has master plans for sewer main lines, water and wastewater treatment that will eventually accommodate all of the lands within the Area of City Impact. Quality of life is a huge factor when a company is selecting a community to do business. Having good schools, parks and supporting services in place help Meridian rise to the top of the class. Please see the Public Services, Facilities and Utilities section of this report for more information on infrastructure and other services.

Taxes

Idaho offers one of the lowest overall per capita tax burdens in the West. Taxes are based on a mix of income, sales, and property taxes. The State does not have roll back or transfer tax.

Labor Force

The growth of Meridian's labor force paralleled population growth over the same period; the labor force grew substantially from 19,638 in 2003 to 39,386 in 2013, a 101% increase. It is likely that new employment opportunities were a driving force in population increases in the 1990s and 2000s, which explains this apparent correlation. Conversely, as new residents moved into the area, demand for local goods and services also escalated, which in turn increased the need for more local workers.

The labor force in the Ada-Canyon two-county region also grew considerably from 2003 to 2013. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that Ada and Canyon counties had a combined labor force of 251,613 in 2004 (74,476 in Canyon and 177,137 in Ada). The labor force grew by 14.42% by 2013 to 293,099 (87,191 in Canyon and 205,908 in Ada).

TABLE 2Q: 2013 IDAHO TAX RATES

Type	Value
Corporate	7.4%
Sales & Use	6.0%
Inventory	0.0%

Source: Idaho Department of Commerce.

TABLE 2R: ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY JURISDICTION (%)

Year	Meridian	Boise	Nampa	Ada	Canyon
2004	2.7%	4.1%	5.8%	3.8%	5.3%
2005	2.2%	3.3%	4.5%	3.1%	4.1%
2006	1.7%	2.5%	3.6%	2.3%	3.3%
2007	2.5%	2.6%	3.5%	2.6%	3.6%
2008	4.4%	4.6%	6.0%	4.6%	6.1%
2009	7.7%	7.5%	9.8%	7.6%	9.6%
2010	8.0%	8.4%	10.6%	8.3%	10.6%
2011	7.2%	7.6%	10.4%	7.6%	10.3%
2012	5.9%	6.4%	8.2%	6.3%	8.3%
2013	5.2%	5.6%	6.9%	5.5%	7.0%

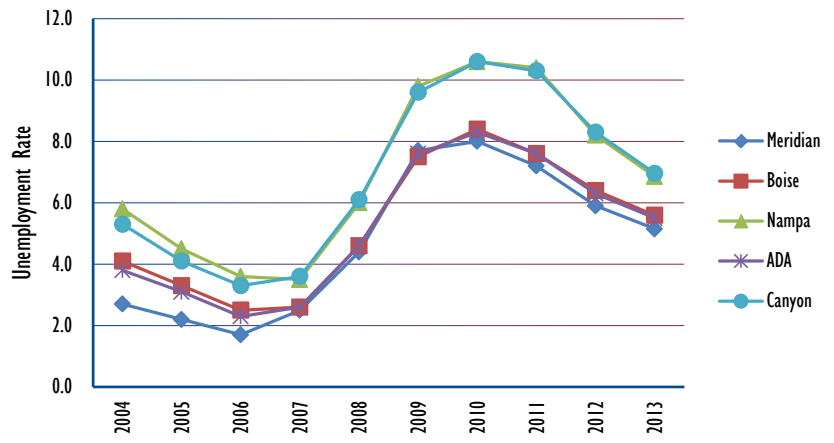
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 4/17/2014.

Employment

Unemployment rates in Meridian dipped below 2% in 2006, at the peak of the regional economic and housing boom. As illustrated in Table 2R, Meridian has typically enjoyed a lower unemployment rate than neighboring communities, although that relative comfort has dissipated somewhat in recent years.

As far as general employment is concerned, Meridian's almost 37,000 jobs in 2013 made up approximately 13% of total jobs region wide. As shown in table 2S, approximately two-thirds of all jobs in Ada County are within the City of Boise.

Annual Unemployment 2004 To 2013



Note: See Table 2R for data.

Employers

Some of the largest employers in Meridian today include: St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, Blue Cross of Idaho, West Ada School District, and Food Services of America. For example, in 2013, Scentsy completed their 168,000 square foot corporate headquarters in the heart of Meridian. This building allows for all 700+ Idaho employees to work under the same roof and adds to the growing number of companies with headquarters in this community.

TABLE 2S: TREASURE VALLEY LABOR FORCE AND JOBS

Jurisdiction	2004 Labor Force	2004 Jobs	2004 Job % of Region	2013 Labor Force	2013 Job	2013 Job % of Region	City % change
Meridian	19,730	19,190	7.96%	38,184	36,217	13.13%	88.73%
Boise	112,716	108,130	44.87%	112,016	105,754	38.35%	-2.20%
Nampa	29,194	27,508	11.42%	37,558	34,978	12.69%	27.16%
Ada	177,137	170,446	70.73%	205,908	194,618	70.58%	14.18%
Canyon	74,476	70,531.00	29.27%	87,191	81,118.92	29.42%	15.01%
Ada & Canyon	251,613	240,977	100.00%	293,099	275,737	100%	14.42%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 4/17/2014.

TABLE 2T: ADA COUNTY EMPLOYMENT BY JURISDICTION AND SECTOR

Employment Type	NAICS Code	Meridian		Boise		Eagle		Garden City		Kuna		Star		Ada Rural		Ada Total	
		Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012	Jobs	% 2012
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	11,21	430	1.3%	1,067	1.0%	182	2.2%	107	2.3%	167	2.7%	12	0.5%	680	2.6%	2,645	1.4%
Construction	23	2,236	6.5%	5,536	5.2%	327	3.9%	319	6.8%	505	8.0%	247	10.5%	2,327	8.8%	11,497	6.1%
Manufacturing	31-33	2,973	8.7%	10,932	10.3%	1,101	13.0%	292	6.2%	540	8.6%	268	11.4%	2,786	10.5%	18,892	10.0%
Wholesale trade	42	1,092	3.2%	2,687	2.5%	318	3.8%	166	3.5%	208	3.3%	95	4.0%	935	3.5%	5,501	2.9%
Retail trade	44-45	4,465	13.0%	12,227	11.5%	1,277	15.1%	490	10.4%	871	13.8%	259	11.0%	3,301	12.5%	22,890	12.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	48-49	1,589	4.6%	4,324	4.1%	326	3.9%	154	3.3%	303	4.8%	49	2.1%	1,275	4.8%	8,020	4.2%
Information	51	1,086	3.2%	2,648	2.5%	298	3.5%	79	1.7%	184	2.9%	60	2.6%	567	2.1%	4,922	2.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	52-53	2,862	8.4%	6,725	6.3%	693	8.2%	312	6.6%	425	6.8%	139	5.9%	1,764	6.7%	12,920	6.8%
Prof, scientific, and mgmt, and admin and waste mgmt services	54-56	3,723	10.9%	14,070	13.2%	1,265	15.0%	634	13.4%	723	11.5%	344	14.7%	2,856	10.8%	23,615	12.5%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	61-62	8,395	24.5%	23,337	21.9%	1,674	19.8%	1,180	25.0%	1,338	21.3%	477	20.3%	5,454	20.6%	41,855	22.1%
Arts, entertainment, and rec, and accommodation and food services	71-72	1,895	5.5%	11,689	11.0%	440	5.2%	453	9.6%	540	8.6%	66	2.8%	1,981	7.5%	17,064	9.0%
Other services, except public administration	81	1,207	3.5%	4,736	4.4%	260	3.1%	259	5.5%	212	3.4%	188	8.0%	1,147	4.3%	8,009	4.2%
Public administration	92	2,274	6.6%	6,526	6.1%	293	3.5%	279	5.9%	280	4.4%	143	6.1%	1,423	5.4%	11,218	5.9%
Total jobs (ages 16+)		34,227		106,504		8,454		4,724		6,296		2,347		26,496		189,048	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

TABLE 2U: 2013 OFFICE VACANCY RATES - 5,000 SF+

Submarket	Building Count	Inventory SF	Direct Vacant SF	Sublease Vacant SF	Total Vacant SF	Vacancy Rate
Meridian	161	3,225,255	487,484	-	487,484	15.1%
Downtown (Boise)	101	4,177,362	309,449	10,957	320,406	7.7%
West Bench (Boise)	162	3,112,976	704,445	25,564	730,009	23.5%
Southwest (Boise)	56	1,041,867	198,022	-	198,022	19.0%
Canyon County	241	2,335,555	183,250	-	183,250	7.3%
All Submarkets	1111	21,332,218	2,602,066	64,622	2,666,688	10.6%

Source: Colliers Paragon, Year-End Real Estate Market Review, 2013.

TABLE 2V: OFFICE ASKING RATES - 5,000 SF+

Submarket	Average Full Service Asking Rates by Building Class			
	All Classes	Class A	Class B	Class C
Meridian	$15.55	$16.48	$12.49	-
Downtown (Boise)	$17.22	$19.37	$16.13	$12.91
West Bench (Boise)	$12.28	$14.10	$12.49	$7.74
Southwest (Boise)	$11.95	$12.85	$9.75	$9.00
Canyon County	$11.29	$12.57	$12.12	$9.12
Averages	$12.80	$15.00	$12.12	$9.48

Source: Colliers Paragon, Year-End Real Estate Market Review, 2013.

TABLE 2W: 2013 RETAIL VACANCY RATES - 5,000 SF+

Submarket	Building Count	Inventory SF	Direct Vacant SF	Sublease Vacant SF	Total Vacant SF	Vacancy Rate
Meridian	113	3,584,685	286,711	1,386	288,097	8.0%
Downtown (Boise)	52	1,254,180	82,435	-	82,435	6.6%
West Bench (Boise)	79	2,990,700	253,969	-	253,969	8.5%
Southwest (Boise)	41	1,724,473	106,510	-	106,510	6.2%
Canyon County	158	6,891,428	472,136	-	472,136	6.9%
All Submarkets	644	21,819,141	1,669,018	12,274	1,681,292	7.7%

Source: Colliers Paragon, Year-End Real Estate Market Review, 2013.

Table 2T breaks down Ada County employment by sector. In Meridian, "Education, Health Care, and Social Assistance" constitute about 25% of all jobs. Over 20% of jobs in Meridian are "Information, Finance, Management, and Professional Services" and an additional 20% are in "Wholesale, Retail, Transportation, and Warehousing." Looking across the entire county, health care jobs are steady. The combination of aging baby boomers and health care reform potential has increased demand and may draw even more investors to this segment in the near term. With a good number of college educated citizens (32% have a bachelor's degree or higher), Meridian is continually becoming an attractive place for companies to locate.

Trends

In late 2009, the Meridian Development Corporation (MDC) hired Bonneville Research to assess the Boise/Meridian market. In their report, Bonneville found that between 1998 and 2008, the Boise/Meridian Metro area economy grew at an annual rate of 5.8%. Employment peaked in the first quarter of 2007 and a slow return to "normal" employment levels is being realized. Bonneville forecasted that demand for commercial office space will be driven by employment growth.

The availability of Class A office space has long been a sought after prospect for Meridian. With the recent addition of The Village at Meridian (138,000 square feet of office space), and the Silverstone Plaza and El Dorado complexes at Eagle Road and Overland Road, Meridian continues to build upon the foundation of established office space. As employment growth continues its climb upward, it is only natural that more office will become available as employers look to expand or relocate. As Table 2U shows, Meridian has grown its commercial inventory to 3.2 million square feet.

Table 2V compares average asking rates for 5,000+ square foot office space in a number of areas in the Treasure Valley, and Table 2W similarly compares 5,000+ square foot retail vacancy rates, for the same areas.

In 2014, the City of Meridian hired a consultant group to conduct a full audit and assessment of economic development activities, including trends, and to recommend how to best utilize assets to maximize strengths. The results of this study should be available by late 2014.

Meridian Chamber of Commerce

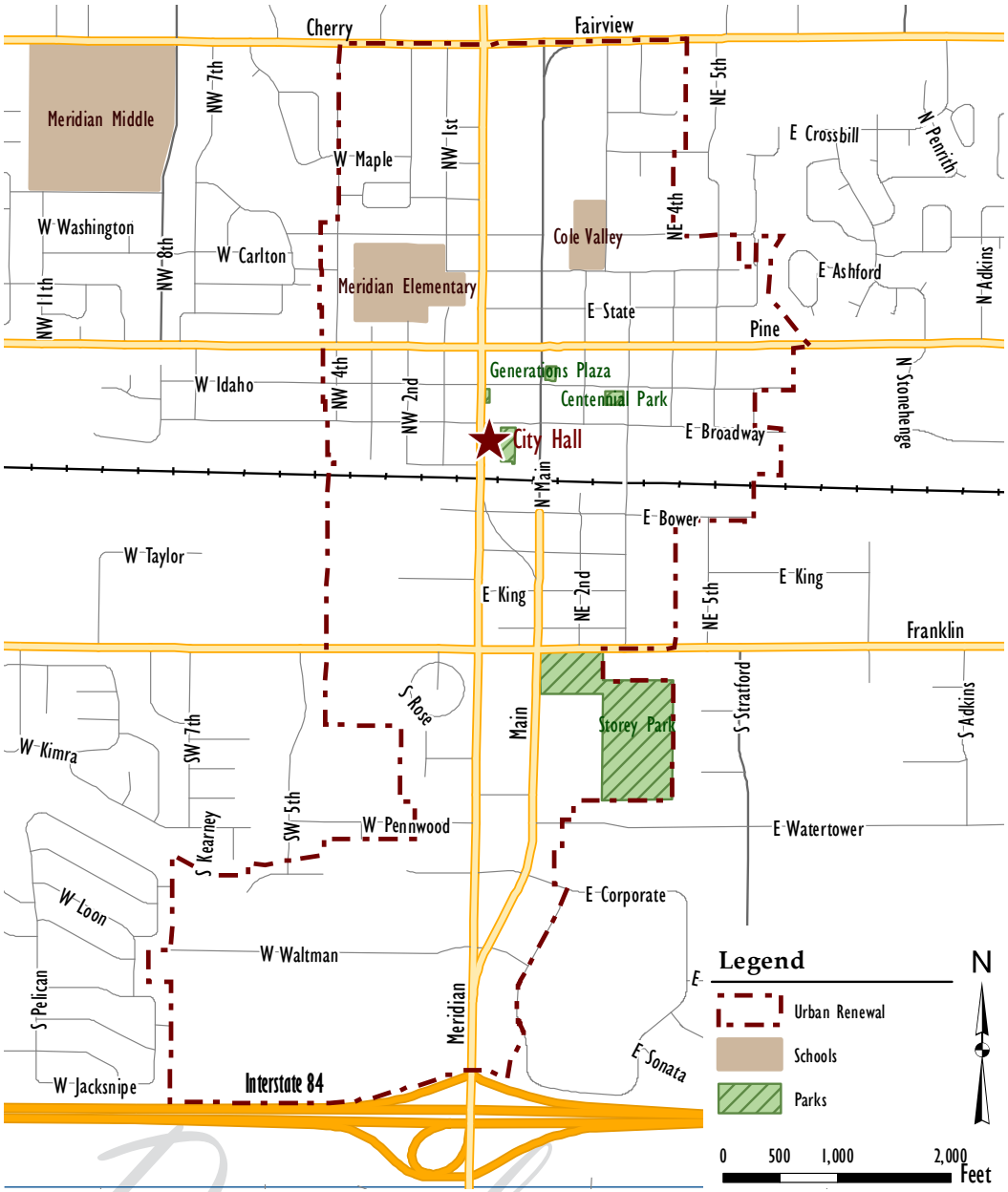
The Meridian Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization, supported by member investment and the committed involvement of leaders in the Meridian business community. The Chamber provides ways to become involved in the community through leadership opportunities, business advocacy, networking, and promotion of individual businesses. The Chamber is in the business of building relationships between business people, and between business, government and the rest of the community, in order to maintain a healthy economy and an excellent quality of life.

Meridian Development Corporation

The Meridian Development Corporation (MDC) was established in 2001 by the Meridian City Council. Although it is an independent agency, MDC functions as the City's urban renewal agency. The Urban Renewal Area is shown in Figure 2A, and is loosely bound by Fairview/Cherry to the north, East 4th Street to the east, west 4th street, and I-84 to the south.

MDC is charged with stimulating and expanding downtown economic development activities. In 2010, MDC completed Destination: Downtown, a visioning plan focused on developing the downtown core. Destination: Downtown established seven

FIGURE 2A: MERIDIAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BOUNDARY



Source: City of Meridian Planning Department, 2013.

downtown districts, four vision elements: Livability, Mobility, Prosperity, and Sustainability, and addressed implantation and phasing of improvements. Renewal and redevelopment is supported through strategic use of resources to create successful projects in downtown (MDC receives tax increment financing). The MDC focus is not only on job creation and affordable workforce housing, but also on developing a pedestrian friendly, transit-supported, diverse and balanced downtown environments.

Business Enterprise Areas

Meridian is effectively positioned to support existing, emerging, and new businesses by creating planned and integrated Business Enterprise Areas (see Figure 2B). These areas are designed to attract and foster related business interests. This provides an environment where business can thrive in an atmosphere conducive to attracting and retaining a highly qualified workforce.

The Core

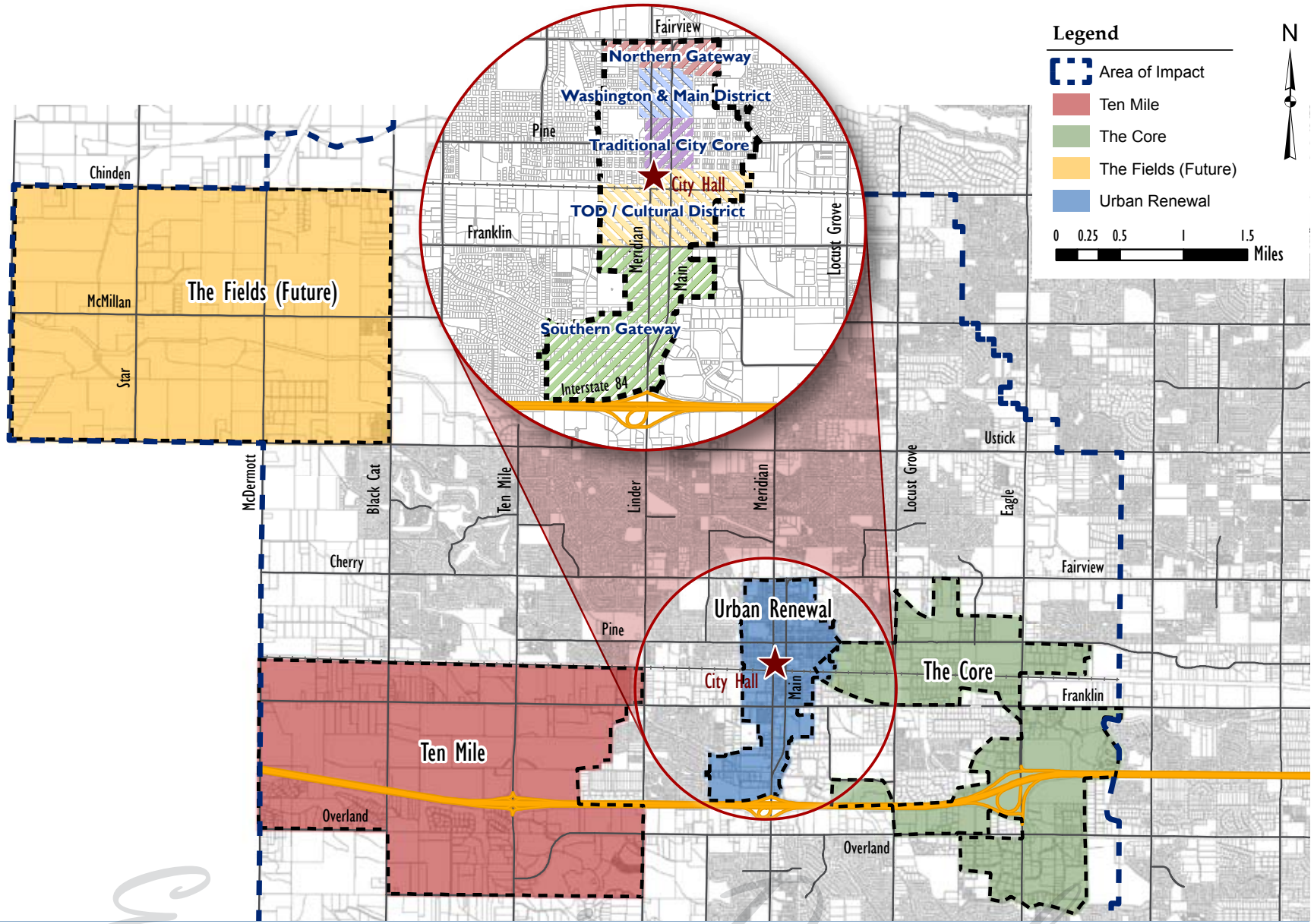
Meridian has launched the new Health Sciences & Technology Corridor, The Core[4], in the heart of the Treasure Valley. The corridor is anchored by several business campuses and Idaho State University with curriculum focused on medical/health sciences. Not only achieving Meridian's motto of being built for business, The Core will also focus on maintaining a healthy community that is designed for living. Developing a corridor of complementary businesses and services geared towards the medical industry and high technology, The Core will provide a one-stop destination for visitors and workforce with all necessary amenities.

The Fields

In 2014, the City of Meridian hired a consultant group to conduct an investigation to determine if Meridian (and the Boise-Meridian-Nampa MSA) could support an Agriculture and Bioscience Mixed-use Research & Innovation District. The District would be located in the northwest corner of Meridian, lying in the Area of City Impact between current city boundaries and the Canyon-Ada County line. This investigation is moving into phase 2 and 3, and should be complete by the end of 2014.

[4] See the website at http://www.thecoreidaho.com

FIGURE 2B: BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AREAS



Source: City of Meridian Planning Department, 2013.

Economic Development

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How is the Land in Meridian Developed?

Land Use, Transportation, and Community Design

This chapter discusses characteristics of the land in the City of Meridian and its Area of City Impact (AOCI). As required by Idaho State Statute, analysis on Land Use, Transportation, and Community Design components of the Comprehensive Plan are provided in this section of the Existing Conditions Report. These components bridge the gap between the previous section (population, demographics, etc.) and the analysis that follows later in the report on other planning components (public services, utilities, recreation, etc.)

Photo: Centennial Park on the corner of NE 3rd Street and Idaho Avenue

This section of the report is organized by outlining past trends and current conditions in each of the three components: land use, transportation and community design. This portion of the report also includes a brief analysis of future land uses, transportation trends, and community design principles. This information will be used to track progress and update the Goals, Objectives and Action Items of the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan.

The primary purpose of the Land Use discussion is to look at current zoning, future zoning, and land uses within existing City limits and the adjacent AOCI. Recent trends in land use, and the variety of land use categories and designations are briefly explained here, but are covered in more depth in the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan. Land use inventories are used to forecast the demand for future facilities such as parks, water lines and roads, and for services such as police and fire protection. These past trends and future forecasts can be used by City Departments as well as businesses, developers, and property owners to anticipate market demand when locating or developing public facilities and private projects.

The purpose of the Transportation portion of the chapter is to explain how roads are classified and used in the region; how planning for future facilities is done; and it assesses current trends in transportation. An explanation on funding for transportation projects is provided as well as how roadways are starting to evolve into complete streets. A current inventory of pathways, transit and travel lanes are explained, showing where additional infrastructure and modal options are necessary.

Photo: Broadview University, located on Overland Road near Eagle Road

In the Community Design segment, the City's Design Guidelines are discussed and explored for the purpose of showing the reader how they relate back to the vision of the community and implementation of the future land use plan. The community design analysis also evaluates how quality of life and sustainability play into making Meridian a great community to live, work, and play.

Land Use

Land use is a physical expression of the community. Identification and analysis of a City's existing land use development patterns provides a basis for future land use decisions. Because the City of Meridian has experienced such rapid growth and expansion, it is important to inventory current land uses and then determine how further development should occur. See tables 3A and 3C for acreages of zoning and land uses.

Built Environment

In recent years, land uses in and around Meridian have changed from primarily agricultural to a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. That trend is likely to continue, as land traditionally used for agriculture continues to be developed to support the needs of an ever-growing community.

The pattern of land uses in Meridian is typical of many suburban western U.S. cities. Situated along a rail line, historic Old Town is comprised of primarily one- and two-story commercial structures. Single-family homes with fenced yards and attached garages are the norm for residential lots. Along well-traveled roads and highways, shops, restaurants, and supply stores have developed. Industrial uses are generally located along the railroad and interstate. As Meridian's population has grown, and as more vehicles traverse area roads, the pattern has intensified. Portions of the City's northern and eastern boundaries have urbanized adjacent to Eagle and Boise. However, farmland and large-lot County subdivisions still dominate the western and southern edges of the community.

Residential

A current zoning map reflects the dominance of residential zoning in Meridian; 68.71% of the land area currently incorporated is zoned residential. These residential neighborhoods are primarily developed at three to five dwelling units per acre, with single-family detached homes. Residential areas also include some duplex units, apartments, single-family attached units, and manufactured homes. Densities within the residential areas range from very low (less than 1 dwelling unit per acre) to high (up to 40 dwellings per acre). While

relative to other communities of similar size, Meridian lacks diversity and balance in residential form and density; recent development trends have seen a large increase of multi-family units near mixed use commercial and employment centers.

Commercial

Commercially zoned lands represent 18.68% of Meridian. Most major intersections in Meridian now contain largely commercial-type zoning and development. Commercial and retail areas are typically along transportation corridors and include everything from small commercial centers and individual businesses to regional malls and commercial/office business parks. Uses include retail, wholesale, service, office, and limited manufacturing. There are five zoning sub-districts within the commercial designation. The General Retail and Service Commercial (C-G) district is the most common, followed by Community Business (C-C) and Neighborhood Business (C-N). Since 2002, two new commercial zoning districts, Mixed Employment (M-E) and High Density Employment (H-E), have been added to the commercial zoning districts of the Unified Development Code. While 118.9 acres of these zoning districts have been annexed, none of these sites have yet developed.

Photo: Gateway into the Paramount subdivision

Office

Although only 773.4 acres (4.26% of City) are currently zoned for limited office uses (L-O), Meridian enjoys a plethora of office uses that are scattered throughout the commercial districts. A significant amount of the office uses exist as ancillary uses within commercially zoned districts. Office uses are allowed in mixed use and in commercially zoned parts of the City as principally permitted uses. Along arterial roadways, many homes have converted to offices and several professional office complexes have developed. In downtown, near the Eagle/Overland intersection, and in north Meridian, office uses continue to materialize in response to burgeoning residential neighborhood needs for medical and professional services (e.g. - doctors, dentists, chiropractors, etc.)

Industrial

Industrial zoning represents 6.78% of the total land area of the City. The City has two industrial zoning districts: Light Industrial (I-L) and Heavy Industrial (I-H). Industrial uses in the City of Meridian tend to be of the light-industrial variety and are primarily located along the railroad corridor and the Interstate. Industrial areas of the City typically include warehousing, general manufacturing, railroad users, and industrial/office business parks. Today, there are several opportunities for reinvestment in industrially zoned on under-utilized properties. The City, through its economic development initiatives, hopes to expand its job base by attracting new industrial users, particularly clean industry.

Mixed Use

Over the past several years, areas planned for mixed use have developed with largely commercial uses. Because of this trend, in 2010 the City amended the mixed use sections of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure diversity in uses for areas planned for mixed use. Similar to the Mixed Employment (M-E) and High Density Employment (H-E) zoning districts, the Traditional Neighborhood – Center (TN-C) and Traditional Neighborhood – Residential (TN-R) zoning districts are relatively new. In 2005, when the City adopted the Unified Development Code (UDC), the TN-C and TN-R districts were added. Today, less than 2% of Meridian is zoned for mixed use.

However, more and more mixed-use developments—projects that include multiple land uses—are being built in Meridian. Often these developments use a variety of the typical zoning districts (e.g. C-G and R-15) to achieve a mix of land uses. Emphasis on the redevelopment of downtown (Old Town) has been a strong priority. The Old Town area is still in a transitional state, from a small rural downtown with little investment, to a growing center with vast potential. With large acreages of commercial and light industrial uses developing along the interstate and other major roadways, reinvestment in Old Town has not kept up with the pace of new development. The Ten Mile Interchange area still contains vast opportunities on largely undeveloped green fields. As the Future Land Uses section will report, aside from residential, mixed-use areas contain the most opportunities for development and re-development in Meridian.

Civic

Civic areas include public, quasi-public, and open spaces. They include uses like government facilities, public schools, utilities, libraries, post offices, park and recreational areas, and cemeteries. Parks, schools and other public facilities are spread throughout Meridian in a variety of zoning districts.

Photo: Evening view of the Village at Meridian

Zoning—Land Use Correlation

The City of Meridian maintains a Zoning Map that depicts zoning districts of the City. There are 16 zoning districts listed in the UDC for use within the incorporated limits of the City, as noted in Table 3A. There are a limited number of properties in Meridian that are zoned one designation, but are actually being used for a different purpose. This mismatch occurs for a number of reasons. In some instances, a developer submitted plans a number of years ago and the City approved a zone change but the project never materialized. For example,

TABLE 3A: CURRENT ACREAGES OF ZONING DISTRICT IN MERIDIAN

Zoning District	Acreage	Percentage
Residential (subtotal)	**12,488.3**	**68.71%**
Low-Density (R-2)	243.4	1.34%
Medium Low-Density (R-4)	6,736.7	37.07%
Medium-Density (R-8)	4,761.6	26.20%
Medium High-Density (R-15)	625.6	3.44%
High-Density (R-40)	120.9	0.67%
Commercial (subtotal)	**3,394.8**	**18.68%**
Neighborhood Business (C-N)	129.7	0.71%
Community Business (C-C)	519.0	2.86%
General Retail and Service Commercial (C-G)	2,627.3	14.46%
Mixed Employment (M-E)	64.6	0.36%
High Density Employment (H-E)	54.3	0.30%
Office (subtotal)	**773.4**	**4.26%**
Office Subtotal Limited Office (L-O)	773.4	4.26%
Industrial (subtotal)	**1,231.4**	**6.78%**
Light Industrial (I-L)	1,231.4	6.78%
Heavy Industrial (I-H)	0.0	0.00%
Traditional Neighborhood/Mixed Use (subtotal)	**287.5**	**1.58%**
Old Town (O-T)	133.8	0.74%
Traditional Neighborhood Center (TN-C)	90.7	0.50%
Traditional Neighborhood Residential (TN-R)	63.1	0.35%
TOTAL	**18,175.4**	**100.00%**

Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, March 2014, as compiled by Ada County.

the City has a number of industrially zoned properties near the downtown that are developed as residences. In other instances, developers made use of previous City codes that allowed up to 20% of a site to be used for uses not otherwise allowed in the district. In north Meridian particularly, there are several developments that are primarily residential, but have a limited amount of existing office or small scale commercial uses within a residential zone.

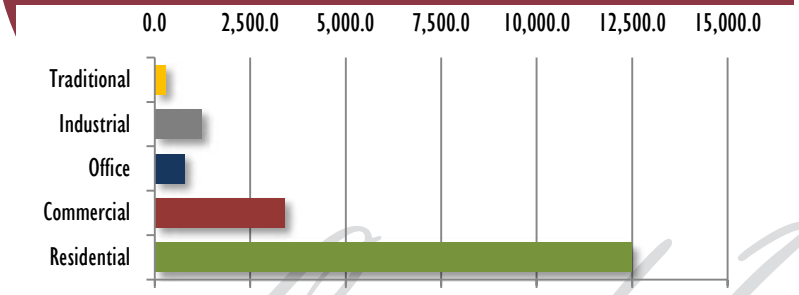
Land Ownership

Land in the City and our Area of City Impact is controlled by a mix of private and public ownerships, with a large majority of the land (almost 94%) being held privately. The remaining 6% is owned by West Ada School District, utility-related companies, the State of Idaho, the Federal Government, Ada County, the Ada County Highway District, the City of Meridian, and other local government entities including the Meridian Cemetery Maintenance District and others. The amount of privately owned land in Meridian is substantial when compared to the County as a whole. The 2007 Ada County Comprehensive Plan reports that only 47.7% of the entire County is privately owned. The bulk of the remainder, over 46%, is federally owned. Table 3B summarizes non-private land ownership within the Area of City Impact.

Future Land Uses

Today, the City of Meridian has over 17,000 acres within its municipal boundaries. At full build out, Meridian is anticipated to incorporate approximately 39,000 acres. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) portrays locations for the various land use types. The FLUM's primary purpose is to define and map future land uses so that development occurs in the direction

Zoning District Category Acreages



Note: See Table 3A for data.

TABLE 3B: NON-PRIVATE LAND OWNERSHIP IN AOCI

Jurisdiction	Acreage	% of AOCI
Meridian Joint School District No.2	791.22	1.997%
City of Meridian	720.19	1.817%
Other Local (subtotal)	**84.04**	**0.212%**
Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District	34.63	0.087%
Meridian Cemetary District	26.23	0.066%
Meridian Heights Water & Sewer District	13.11	0.033%
Meridian Library District	3.57	0.009%
Meridian Library District	3.50	0.009%
Fairview Joint Cemetary District	1.00	0.003%
Star Joint Fire Protect District	1.00	0.003%
Urban Renewal District for the City of Meridian	0.96	0.002%
Settlers Irrigation District	0.05	0.000%
County (subtotal)	**97.93**	**0.247%**
Ada County Highway District	58.38	0.147%
Western Ada Recreation District	25.09	0.063%
Ada County	14.45	0.036%
State (subtotal)	**165.84**	**0.418%**
Idaho Department of Transportation	85.11	0.215%
Idaho State Police	42.95	0.108%
State of Idaho	14.23	0.036%
Idaho Department of Lands	12.95	0.033%
Idaho State University	10.60	0.027%
Federal (subtotal)	**72.14**	**0.182%**
Bureau of Reclamation	69.09	0.174%
United States Postal Service	3.04	0.008%
US Department of Housing and Urban Development	0.01	0.000%
Utilities (subtotal)	**90.96**	**0.230%**
Intermountain Gas	64.01	0.162%
Idaho Power Company	21.96	0.055%
Northwest Pipeline	4.27	0.011%
Century Link	0.46	0.001%
United Water	0.25	0.001%
Subtotal of Non-pritvate Land Ownership	**2,533.21**	**6.393%**
Total City AOCI	**39,627.01**	**100.000%**

Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, March 2014, as compiled by Ada County.

and manner most desired by Meridian's stakeholders. The FLUM works in conjunction with the text of the Comprehensive Plan, city code, and the various policies of the City. However, the FLUM is not a zoning map and differs in that it describes the character and type of the use that is desired in the future, and not necessarily what currently exists. Over time, however, the FLUM has also evolved to depict where some existing land uses do exist. For example, existing schools, parks, fire stations and other civic and private uses are depicted on the FLUM.

The FLUM depicts a built-out Meridian that is very diverse in residential densities, commercial and industrial land uses, and public/quasi-public opportunities. While the FLUM depicts many types of land use designations, they can be broadly divided into nine basic categories:

- Rural: Rural / Estate Residential is a unique land use designation that allows for the preservation of agricultural uses and ancillary development of single-family homes on large parcels, where City services like sewer and water may or may not be provided.
- Residential: These areas are intended to provide a variety of housing types. Uses include a range of densities varying from large estate lots to multi-family homes.
- Commercial: These areas are intended to provide a full-range of commercial and retail services for area residents and visitors.
- Office: These areas provide opportunities for low-impact business areas including: personal and professional offices, technology and resource centers.

TABLE 3C: FUTURE LAND USES WITHIN MERIDIAN'S AOCI

Future Land Use	Total Area		Annexed		Not Annexed	
	Acres	% of AOCI	Acres	%	Acres	% of AOCI
Rural	1,948.8	5.0%	0.0	0.0%	1,948.8	5.0%
Residential	26,713.5	68.4%	11,342.1	63.5%	15,371.4	39.3%
Commercial	1,552.2	4.0%	1,442.1	8.1%	110.1	0.0%
Office	374.0	1.0%	292.4	1.6%	81.6	0.2%
Employment	660.5	1.7%	281.7	1.6%	378.8	1.0%
Industrial	955.4	2.4%	609.0	3.4%	346.4	0.9%
Old Town	335.9	0.9%	335.8	1.9%	0.1	0.0%
Mixed Use	4,994.4	12.8%	2,441.5	13.7%	2,552.9	6.5%
Civic & Utility	1,536.6	3.9%	1,116.5	6.3%	420.1	1.1%
Total	39,071.4	100.0%	17,861.2	100.0%	21,210.3	54.3%

Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, March 2014.

- Employment: These land uses designations, for use primarily within the Ten Mile Interchange specific area plan (see section on Specific Area Plans), are intended to support a variety of office and manufacturing uses of varying intensity, along with supporting and complimentary secondary uses.

- Industrial: These areas are designated to allow a range of industrial uses to support industrial and commercial activities. Uses may include warehouses, storage units, light and heavy industry such as manufacturing and processing.

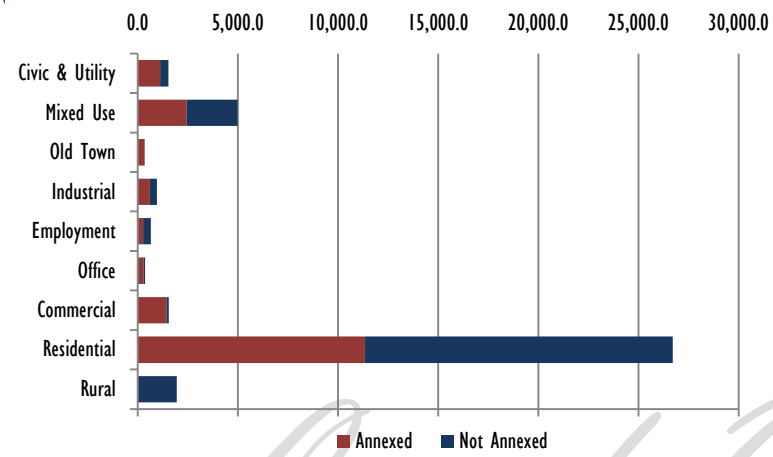
- Old Town: This area includes the historic downtown and the core community activity center, and is a unique type of Mixed Use. A wide variety of land uses are encouraged and envisioned in Old Town.

- Mixed Use: These areas incorporate a variety of different, but complimentary and compatible land uses together. These areas are typically situated in highly visible or transitioning areas of the City, and vary in intensity and allowed uses.

- Civic and Utility: These areas preserve and protect municipal, state, and Federal lands for use as parks, schools, and other public uses.

Table 3C breaks down the total Meridian build out area (in acres) by each of the land use groups previously described. The table differentiates between properties on the FLUM that are currently annexed and those that have not yet been annexed into the City. By far, Meridian is planning for residential to use more of the land area than any other designation; 68.4% of the FLUM shows a residential land use designation. This affords the City an opportunity to promote both very low density housing units and some very high density developments throughout the City. The rest of the anticipated land uses are fairly evenly distributed, with

Future Land Use Category Acreages



Note: See Table 3C for data.

Land Use

Mixed Use being the next highest land use designation at approximately 12.8%.

For detailed descriptions of each specific land use, see Chapter 3 of the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan.

Specific Area Plans

In addition to the general citywide land use designations, plans have also been developed for specific areas of the City. These Specific Area Plans provide additional narrative and specific detail into how development should occur within these areas.

Ten Mile Interchange Specific Area Plan

A specific plan has been developed for approximately 2,800 acres bordered roughly by Linder Road to the east, McDermott Road to the west, the Union Pacific Railroad line to the north, and ½-mile south of Overland Road on the south. The Ten Mile Interchange Specific Area Plan is an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan and provides information on land use, the roadway network, and design guidelines specific to the Ten Mile Interchange area.

Destination Downtown (Urban Renewal)

The Destination Downtown specific area plan outlines a vision and marketing strategy for strengthening downtown Meridian's role in the community. The planning area for Destination Downtown encompasses not only the historic areas of downtown, but also the entire urban renewal area extending from Fairview Avenue/Cherry Lane to Interstate 84.

A community-building development group, CRSA was hired by the Meridian Development Corporation (MDC) in 2009 to help define a vision for Downtown Meridian. The outcome

Photo: The COMPASS/VRT building on Broadway Avenue and East 2nd Street (within the Urban Renewal area)

of the public visioning process were several distinct districts, with anticipated uses varying from offices and retail, to entertainment and lodging, restaurants, open space, and variety of residential uses. Pedestrian amenities are emphasized throughout the study area. Public and private investment to ensure that Old Town becomes a centralized activity center with public, cultural, and recreational structures is encouraged. The City's Community Development Department has and is working with MDC to link the Destination Downtown plan with the City's Comprehensive Plan, Capital Improvement Plans, and development policies.

Fields District

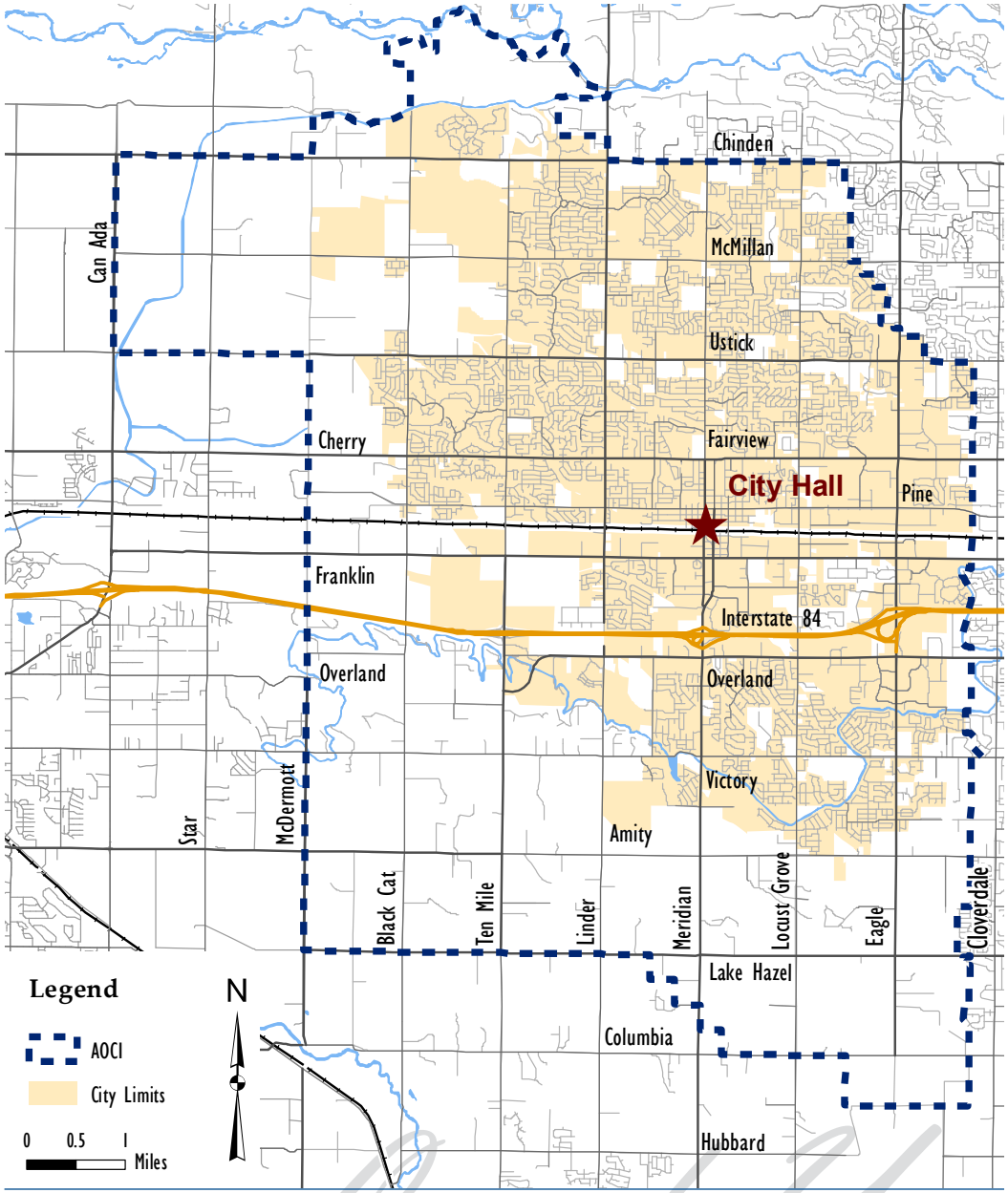
The City has identified one other area for developing a specific plan. The Fields District is located in the northwest corner of the City's Area of City Impact and is tentatively bound along the Ada/Canyon County line, Chinden Boulevard, Black Cat Road, and Ustick Road. The City has been engaged in research and feasibility studies in this area, and in the near future may initiate a public participation plan leading to a detailed specific area plan.

Area of City Impact

In accord with section 67-6526 of Idaho Code, an Area of City Impact (AOCI) has been established for Meridian (see Figure 3A). The City's AOCI is the future planning area for the City, where annexation and development in Meridian is anticipated. Although all these properties are not yet incorporated, planning responsibilities for these lands rest with the City of Meridian.

The City's AOCI is negotiated with Ada County, pursuant to the Local Land Use Planning Act (LLUPA). Within the City's AOCI, unincorporated properties are governed by Ada County for day-to-day administration of zoning matters. However, the County uses the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan and the negotiated agreement in the administration of those duties. Ada County has applied a Rural Urban Transition (RUT) zoning district to most of the properties within the City's AOCI. The RUT zone allows five-acre-lots, single-family residential development, as well as agricultural-related uses and a range of conditional uses. To request something other than the RUT zoning, the developer must request urban services from the City of Meridian. Such services include sanitary sewer, water, fire, police, parks, transportation, and libraries. The City (with rare exception) will not provide such

FIGURE 3A: MERIDIAN'S AREA OF CITY IMPACT



Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, April 2014.

services unless the property annexes into the City. All County development applications within the AOCI are reviewed by the City of Meridian for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and applicable City policies.

The importance of cooperating with Ada County is imperative to successful, long-term land use, transportation, and utility planning (such as water and sewer). There are very significant financial implications for not doing so. As such, the City of Meridian is committed to fulfilling the terms of its Area of City Impact Agreement with Ada County.

Transportation

Today, Meridian's transportation network is primarily composed of roadways that are designed for moving cars and trucks. There is also however a local network of pathways and sidewalks, and an ever increasing amount of bicycle facilities located throughout the City. There is not a fixed-line mass transit service in Meridian. There are park-and-ride lots in the City and inter-county bus routes that make several runs on the weekdays between Nampa-Caldwell and Meridian-Boise. Although the rail corridor through Meridian has a long and rich history, and still moves freight, the corridor is largely underutilized today. The future does however hold promise for expanded modes of transport and new types of service.

The transportation system into and through Meridian is key to both local and regional commerce and mobility. With Meridian located in the center of the Treasure Valley and along a major east-west interstate connecting the Pacific Northwest to the Inter-Mountain West, moving people, goods and services is critical to maintaining a high quality of life and economic vitality. Congestion adds time and money to commutes, costs businesses time and money, degrades air quality, and creates social burdens. As this chapter explains,

Photo: Looking east down Carlton Avenue, across the newly widened Meridian Road

the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), Ada County Highway District (ACHD), the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) and Valley Regional Transit (VRT) are the key transportation agencies that the City works with to maintain and improve transportation in and around Meridian.

Because Meridian does not have authority over any roadways, the City relies on other agencies to provide the necessary funding for roadway infrastructure and its maintenance. Meridian's major transportation challenge is to work with the transportation agencies in the region to meet the existing need for adequate transportation service, while planning for and accommodating the next wave of growth in a way

that will maximize efficiency. Poorly planned growth leads to worsening traffic problems, and increased traffic congestion may deter potential employers from locating or expanding. In addition to managing future traffic needs, much of the transportation infrastructure already developed will require maintenance and rehabilitation. Ensuring adequate funding for maintenance of roads, while still adding capacity, will be a critical issue in the near future.

Roadway Authority

The City does not have any authority to plan, build or maintain public roadways. The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has authority over the highways and interstate system in Meridian: I-84, SH-69, SH-55 and US 20-26. The Ada County Highways District (ACHD) owns and maintains all of the public, non-ITD roads in Ada County. The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) is the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and is charged with air quality conformity and maintaining the long-range transportation plan for Ada and Canyon counties. Valley Regional Transit (VRT) is the regional public transportation authority for Ada and Canyon counties. City staff and elected officials serve on several transportation agency groups, committees, and boards. Although the City does not have authority, it spends a considerable amount of time and effort to work with ACHD, ITD, COMPASS, and VRT to plan for the needs of the community and ensure that the transportation agencies make decisions that are in the best interest of the City.

Photo: Bridge deck of the Ten Mile Interchange over I-84

Transportation Commission

In addition to many sub-committees, regional advisory committees, and other transportation agency based groups, in which City staff participates, the City has also established a nine-member Transportation Commission that deals with transportation and traffic safety–related issues. The Commission is made up of nine voting members and six non-voting ex-officio members. Members on the Commission are made up of Meridian citizens, business owners or employees, and transportation professionals with technical expertise and/or education. In aggregate, the Commission provides a broad, city-wide perspective on transportation issues. Appointments to the Commission, are made by the Mayor with City Council approval.

The Meridian Transportation Commission's primary responsibilities include making recommendations to the City Council on traffic safety and transportation matters that are brought before them either by an agency or a member of the public. The Commission annually compiles a list of the highest

priority roadway, intersection and pedestrian improvement projects in Meridian. Other recommendations regarding transportation issues are regularly sent to the Mayor and City Council for consideration. With Valley Regional Transit (VRT) staff assistance, the Commission is currently working on a public transportation plan for Meridian. The Task Force also discusses issues like speed limits, meeting the needs of the traveling public, and safe routes to schools. The Transportation Commission generally meets the first Monday of each month at City Hall.

Roadway Network

As shown in Table 3D, Meridian has more than 500 centerline miles of roadway today, including state highways and the interstate.

Meridian's roadways are described in terms of a hierarchy of streets, known as a functional classification system. This system, which is jointly used by the ITD, ACHD, COMPASS, and the City, classifies roads and highways into three classifications: arterials, collectors, and local streets (which includes private streets). The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials describe functional classification as a process that involves grouping roadways into classes according to the character of service they are intended to provide.

Principal arterials facilitate statewide and interstate transport, involve longer trip lengths, carry high volumes of traffic, and should have a minimal number of access points and limited on-street parking. Except for on I-84, roadway widths typically vary from two to five lanes wide with detached sidewalks on each side and bicycle lanes, within approximately 100 feet of right-of-way. They may serve as a separator for incompatible land uses.

TABLE 3D: ROADWAY MILES BY CLASSIFICATION TYPE

Roadway Classification	Number of Miles	Percentage of All Roadways
Interstate	13.5	2.5%
Principal Arterial	58.5	10.9%
Minor Arterial	59.6	11.1%
Collector	19.4	3.6%
Local	385.1	71.8%
Total	536.1	100.0%

Source: Meridian Planning Division, 2014, as compiled by Ada County.

Minor arterials provide long-distance access, mainly within the state and region, and frequently contain three to five travel lanes, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. These include medium traffic volume streets to and from other arterials and the freeway. They collect traffic from less significant roadways and distribute traffic and are intended to minimize access conflicts. These arterials may also be section line roads.

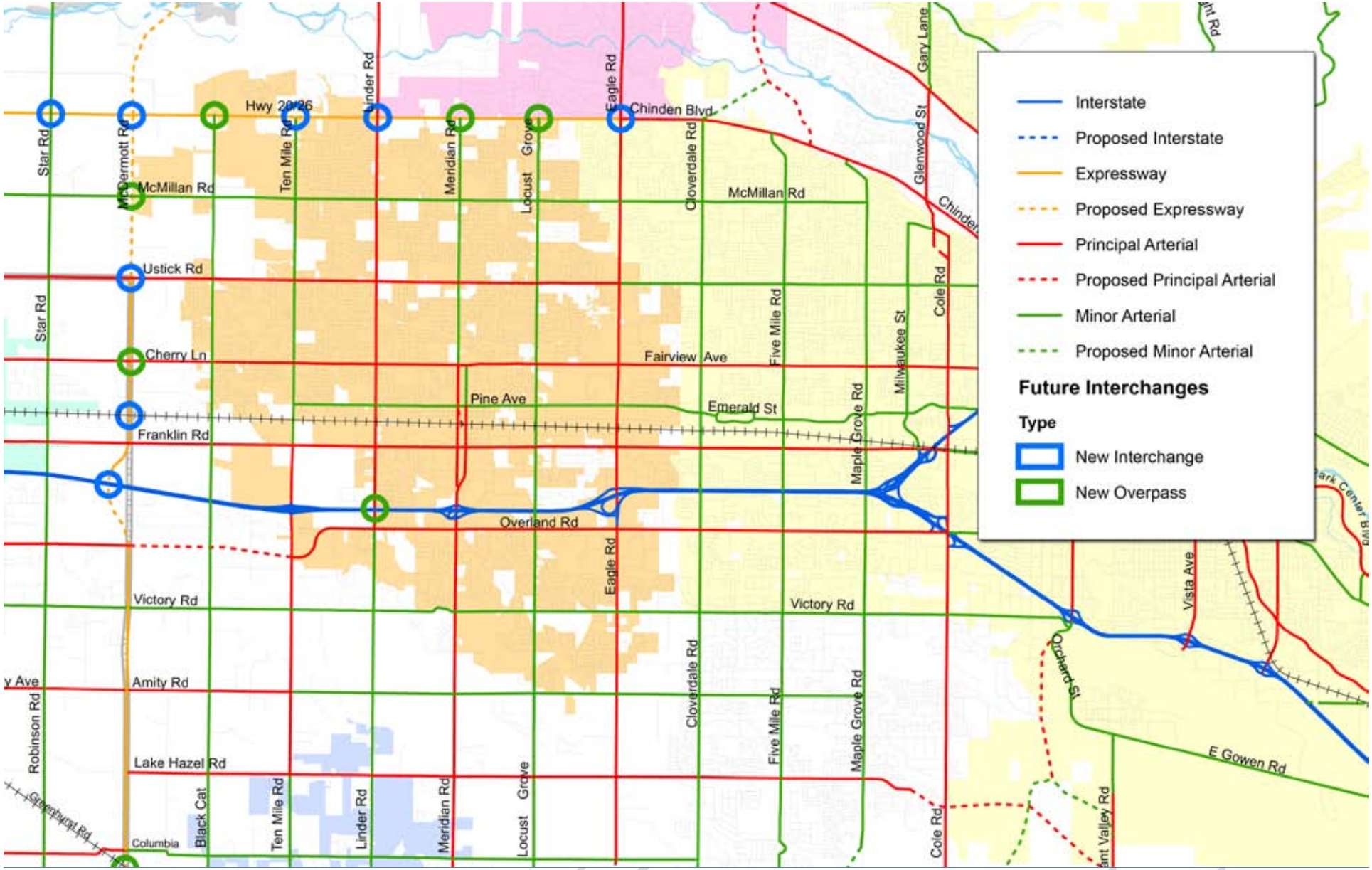
As shown in Figure 3B, most arterials in Meridian are on section lines, in one mile intervals north-south and east-west. The notable exceptions are Pine Avenue and Main Street downtown. A number of the arterial roadways in Meridian are currently two-lane roadways; with the rapid growth over the past ten years, arterial roadways are transitioning into three- and five-lane roadways.

Interstates, State Highways and Arterials

Meridian has three State Highways that traverse through it. A fourth, State Highway 16 (SH 16), is planned as a freeway/expressway to someday traverse the western edge of the City. The southern portion of Meridian is bisected from the northern part of town by Interstate 84 (I-84).

There are four (principal arterial) state highways that have a significant influence on the transportation system and therefore deserve special attention:

FIGURE 3B: INSET OF 2040 PLANNING FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION MAP



Source: COMPASS, 2013. Original @ http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/func-maps.htm

Transportation

Photo: State Highway 55/Eagle Road, between Fairview Avenue and River Valley Street

- US 20-26/Chinden Boulevard: US 20-26, also known as Chinden Boulevard, runs along the northern edge of the City. This highway serves as the north boundary of Meridian's Area of City Impact east of Linder Road and bisects the Area of City Impact west of Linder Road. It is expected to be five to seven lanes wide at build-out of the City. The City believes this roadway needs to be protected from multiple access points and preserved as a high capacity corridor (see the US 20-26 Access Management Plan.) The City of Meridian has ordinances and development standards that preserve the highway as a major regional transportation facility, connecting the cities of Nampa, Caldwell, Star, Meridian, Eagle and Boise. The City supports beautification and appropriate sound mitigation measures along the Chinden Boulevard corridor.

- State Highway 16 (future extension): The extension of State Highway 16 from State Highway 44 to I-84 is a critical step to providing regional mobility for citizens from north Ada County and Gem County to I-84 and south Ada County. A preferred alignment and Environment Study have been completed. The 2040 Planning Functional Classification Map designates SH 16 as an expressway. SH 16 is currently under construction from State Highway 44 down to US 20-26, and is scheduled for completion in August of 2014. The section of SH 16 between US 20-26 and I-84 is currently unfunded.

- State Highway 55/Eagle Road: State Highway 55 (SH 55), also known as Eagle Road, connects Meridian with the cities of Boise to the east and Eagle to the north. Eagle Road is the most heavily traveled non-interstate roadway in the State of Idaho. Issues that impact Eagle Road traffic will also have an impact on all of Meridian. Recent improvements to Eagle Road include widening, safety medians, additional lighting, and landscaping consistent with the ITD Eagle Road Corridor Study. Additional widening improvements are still planned, and the City will continue to pursue additional enhancements to reduce congestion and improve usability and safety for all modes of travel.

- State Highway 69/Meridian Road: State Highway 69 (SH 69), also known as Meridian Road, connects Meridian with Kuna to the south. Although SH 69/Meridian Road is on a section line, and is designated as an arterial throughout Meridian, it varies in form and function. Meridian Road is designated as a minor arterial from Chinden Boulevard, south to Cherry Lane, where it changes in designation to a principal arterial. For the next two miles, between Cherry Lane and I-84, Meridian Road, goes through downtown

and is owned and maintained by ACHD. At I-84, Meridian Road becomes State Highway 69 and is a State of Idaho-maintained facility. Meridian Road/SH 69 varies in street section and speed throughout the City, but not in its importance to the transportation network. The City of Meridian has ordinances and development standards that preserve Meridian Road through downtown and south of the Interstate.

Collectors

Collectors serve as key transportation routes and link local roads with other collectors or arterials. Typically, they provide direct service to residential areas, contain two to three travel lanes, and have sidewalks and bicycles lanes. Collectors typically have right-of-way widths between 57 and 88 feet, and may have on-street parking. Examples of current collector roadways are: Central Drive, Long Lake Way, and Chateau Drive.

Collectors are designed to carry higher volumes of traffic and (often seamlessly) connect one arterial to another through a given mile. Collectors are typically constructed by private developers at the time of construction of a subdivision. They may or may not connect through an entire mile section as a classified collector, but in conjunction with local streets, they should connect from one arterial to another. Collector roads were the subject of an Ada County Highway District-funded study by J-U-B Engineers in August 2001. The City of Meridian supports and will apply the following conclusions of that study:

- Intersection Spacing: Intersections of collector roads and arterial roads should be located at or near the ½ mile point within any given section.

Photo: Main Street in front of Meridian City Hall

- Alignment: Collectors should extend in an essentially straight line for 200 feet to 400 feet from an intersection. Beyond that point the alignment is flexible.
- Discontinuity Between Sections: Collectors should not be in a straight alignment for more than two miles to prevent their use as de facto arterials.
- Further, the City will use the ACHD Livable Street Design Guide and Master Street Map when reviewing development applications for collector design and cross-section.

Local Streets

Local streets serve to provide direct access to abutting residential and commercial areas and should be for local traffic movement. Generally, they are two lanes wide with parking and sidewalks, and have a right-of-way width of approximately 50 feet. Through traffic is discouraged. Approximately 70% of streets in Meridian are classified as local streets.

Entryway Corridors

The City has designated several entryway corridors that lead into and out of the community. As a gateway to the City, the principle is to protect and strengthen the visual appearance of the roadway corridor for those entering. Entryway corridors are depicted on the Future Land Use Map and explained in the text of the Comprehensive Plan. Generally, entryway corridors require additional landscaping along key arterial roadways.

Travel Times and Commuting

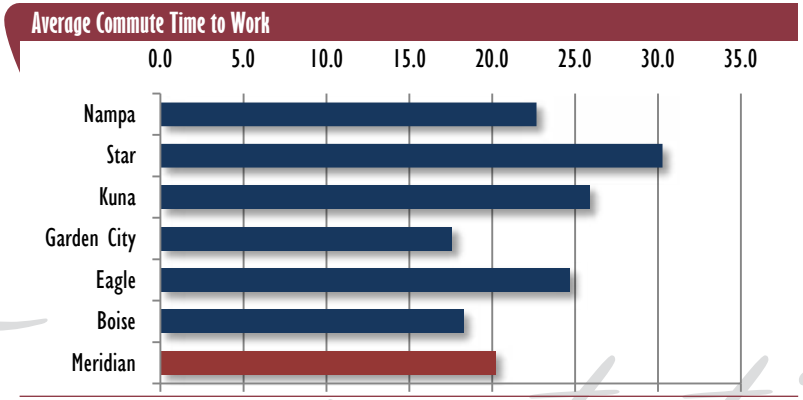
As shown in Table 3E, the average commute time in 2012 for those living in Meridian is 20.2 minutes. This is just slightly longer than the average commute time for all Ada County residents. However, the average commute time in Meridian is less than the surrounding communities of Eagle, Kuna and Star.

The time of day people travel has a significant impact on not only commute times but also on planning for transportation infrastructure. The highest portion of trips in Ada County occurs during the morning and late-afternoon rush hours. Therefore, demand on roadways leads to congestion during these peak times. This congestion often causes more people to look at alternative times to travel, and when available, alternative modes of transportation. In Ada County, the "rush hour" is only about two hours per day with peaks between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. and between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. (see Figure 3C). Spreading out the distribution of trips would make more efficient use of the transportation infrastructure already in place. Policies like staggered work hours or non-traditional work schedules, could be designed by businesses to encourage travel outside of the normal rush hour. Today, most work schedules are the traditional 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

TABLE 3E: AVERAGE COMMUTE TIME TO WORK

Community	Commute time in minutes
Meridian	20.2
Boise	18.3
Eagle	24.7
Garden City	17.6
Kuna	25.9
Star	30.3
Nampa	22.7
Ada	19.9
Canyon	22.7

Source: 2012 COMPASS Regional Household Travel Survey.



Note: See Table 3E for data.

Transportation

Transportation Funding Plans

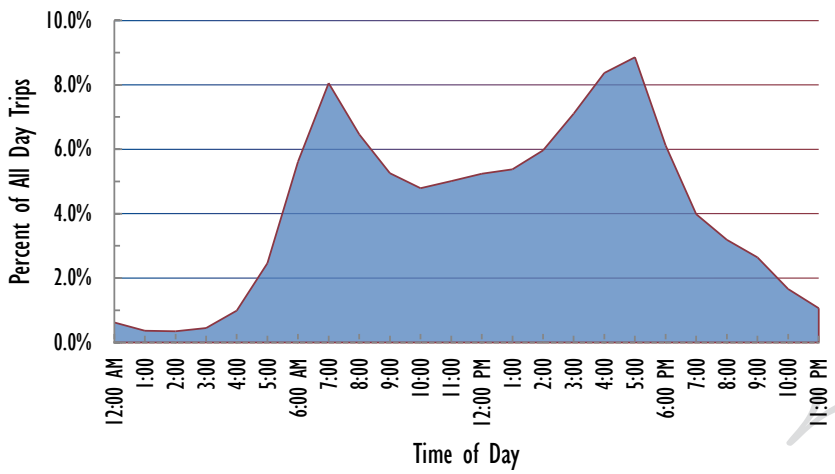
Long-Range Plans

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) maintains the region's long range transportation plan, Communities in Motion (CIM), which contains the regionally significant corridors in Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Boise, Gem and Payette counties. COMPASS does transportation modeling for the region and uses traffic forecasts to not only anticipate where roadway projects are needed but also to monitor air quality standards and to provide development activity reports.

The COMPASS Board, which is composed of local elected officials and special interest organizations, is charged with making decisions about transportation and related air quality planning, primarily through CIM. The 2035 version of the long-range plan was adopted by the COMPASS Board in 2010.

FIGURE 3C: MERIDIAN AREA TRIP DISTRIBUTION BY TIME OF DAY, 2013

(Average Weekday Traffic for 7 Selected Sites)



Source: ITD Traffic Counts October 2013, via COMPASS, February 2014.

The 2040 version of the plan, currently in draft format, is to be adopted in 2014. The Federal government requires CIM to be updated at least every four years. The plan addresses anticipated transportation issues over the next 20 years, evaluates how projected population and economic growth and development patterns will impact current transportation facilities, and considers funding and expenditures for future transportation needs. CIM seeks to strike a balance between roadway expansion, maintenance and other transportation alternatives, such as transit, carpooling, bicycling, walking, and transportation demand management. The Ada County Highway District (ACHD) also has a long-range transportation plan, called the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), for Ada County. The ACHD CIP lists arterial roadways that are eligible to use impact fee dollars that are generated within the County. The ACHD CIP is fiscally constrained with a 20 year horizon.

Short-Range Plans

In addition to long-range plans, ITD and ACHD have near-term transportation plans. The ITD's Transportation Investment Program (ITIP) contains about five years of projects and is typically updated annually by the ITD Board, with input from other agencies (like COMPASS) and the public. The projects in COMPASS's CIM are used to draft the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) which feeds into the ITIP. The ITIP shows how Federal transportation funds will be used to finance projects including: roadways, bridges, highway safety, public transportation, maintenance projects like overlays (i.e., new layers of paving), and even airports and air quality projects.

The ACHD near-term funding program is called the Integrated Five Year Work Plan (IFYWP). This plan is usually adopted in summer each year by the ACHD Board of Commissioners.

The IFYWP primarily contains both maintenance and capital projects for roadways, intersections, bridges and pedestrian facilities, and is meant to coincide with the overall budget adoption process. Projects in the IFYWP are prioritized primarily on safety, congestion and other cost-benefit and programmatic criteria. Each year the City of Meridian sends a list of priority projects to ITD, COMPASS and ACHD for consideration as the ITIP, TIP and IFYWP are adopted (see below for more information).

Funding

Funding for roadways in Meridian, and throughout Ada County, is provided through taxes and fees. Most of the money for roadway maintenance and new capital projects are provided via the gas tax, vehicle registration fees, Highway User Funds, development impact fees, and property taxes. In 2005, the ITD recommended that a new program, GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle) bonds, be used to fund six transportation corridors throughout the state. Three of the six corridors: I-84, Caldwell to Meridian; I-84, Orchard to Isaacs Canyon; and, Idaho 16, I-84 to Emmett, are in the Treasure Valley. To date, almost $900 million in GARVEE bonds have been authorized by the Legislature. GARVEE funds were used to widen I-84, build a new interchange at I-84 and Ten Mile Road, and reconstruct the Meridian Road Interchange, which is one of the last GARVEE projects. To keep up with demand, other funding options, like a local option sales tax, an increase to the gas tax and/or establishing economic development zones, have been discussed by the Legislature, but have not been approved. New funding mechanisms will most likely be needed to keep up with the demand for both maintenance and expansion of the necessary transportation infrastructure in the Valley.

Meridian's Priority Roadway Projects

Each year the City Council, at the recommendation of the City's Transportation Commission, sends a list of high priority transportation projects to ITD, ACHD, and COMPASS. The projects in the priority list include state facilities (highways and interchanges), ACHD roadways and intersections, and key pedestrian projects. In 2013, some of the top priority projects were: Ten Mile Road, Cherry to Ustick (road widening); Ustick, Meridian to Leslie Way (road widening); Ten Mile Road, Ustick to McMillan (road widening); Linder Road, Franklin to Cherry (road widening including RR crossing); Meridian Interchange Rebuild; Linder Road Overpass; and pedestrian sidewalks in downtown.

> Most of the money for roadway maintenance and new capital projects is provided via the gas tax, vehicle registration fees, Highway User Funds, development impact fees, and property taxes.

Linking Transportation and Land Use

The relationship between housing, transportation, and the environment is becoming more evident every day. Changes to one impact the others, and there are very real financial and quality of life implications for decisions. In June 2009, a partnership between HUD, DOT and EPA was established to encourage livable and sustainable communities. This Federal-level partnership and policies have set the stage for what is being worked on locally.

Photo: Completing the Split Corridor Phase 2 project was a priority for the City

To better connect transportation planning and land use decisions, ACHD and the cities in Ada County have compiled the Transportation and Land Use Integration Plan (TLIP). This plan, initiated in 2007 and adopted in 2009, envisions livable streets for the future. The goal is to create a roadway network that balances the needs of all roadway users —motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, transit and people with disabilities—with streets that complement the built environment. Because a one-size-fits-all program for roadway construction does not respond to the land use needs of the community, the City and ACHD have agreed to work more closely to join together the land use plans of the City with the transportation plans of the District. There are four tools that ACHD and the City use to implement TLIP: the Complete Streets Policy, the Livable Streets Design Guide, a Cost Share Policy, and a Master Street Map.

Complete Streets Policy

The primary purpose of the ACHD Complete Streets Policy is to ensure that streets, bridges, and transit stops within Ada County are designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so that pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, and people of all ages and abilities can travel safely and independently on and along public streets. In the past, for example, ACHD primarily constructed five-lane arterial streets with attached sidewalk, no bike lanes, and no concern for the abutting land uses. The Complete Streets Policy balances all users' needs and sets the foundation for land use agencies to partner with ACHD to create user-friendly corridors that meet the needs of the traveling public as well as the goals of comprehensive and specific area plans. The Complete Streets Policy is contained in Section 3100 of the ACHD Policy Manual.

Cost Share Policy

A tool in the TLIP repository is the ACHD Cost Share Policy. The Cost Share Policy maintains flexibility within the roadway design process, establishes a consistent set of transportation elements that ACHD will be responsible for, and allows partnering agencies an opportunity to participate in creating a "complete" street section. This policy allows partnering agencies to work with ACHD to design, construct and fund non-transportation elements as part of ACHD's road improvement projects. Many times the City requests features like detached sidewalks with landscaping or multi-use pathways to improve pedestrian safety and enhance community aesthetics along specific roadways. The Cost Share Policy allows a partnering agency to enter into an agreement with

ACHD to ensure appropriate improvements are included for all users, in road projects.

Master Street Map

In January of 2010, ACHD adopted a Master Street Map for Ada County. This map is another TLIP planning tool that works in conjunction with city comprehensive plans. The Map creates a vision for future roadway characteristics based on land use plans and transportation goals. The Master Street Map provides the guide for arterial right-of-way needs, collector street locations and design, regional mobility corridor locations and design, and other specific roadway features desired throughout the City and its Area of City Impact. The Master Street Map designates location, function, and typology for roadways, and specifies the number of travel lanes and right-of-way needed for each collector and arterial in Meridian. Meridian supports the Master Street Map through adoption by reference in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The information contained on the Master Street Map is used by both ACHD and the City when roadway projects are beginning the design process, and in the development review process.

Livable Streets Design Guide

The final tool in the TLIP toolbox is the Livable Streets Design Guide. The Guide sets the design parameters for roadways in Ada County. After referencing the Master Street Map to see what type of roadway is planned, a developer, agency staff, or the general public can go to the Guide to see what elements are specifically envisioned for any arterial and collector roadway. Based on the City's land use components contained in the Comprehensive Plan, pathway locations on the Master Pathway Plan and ACHD's needs for capacity, the Livable Streets Design Guide illustrates what each street typology should look like. There are customized cross sections within the Guide for access, the pedestrian zone, parking, transit, bicycles, buffers, travel lanes and landscaping. Figure 3D depicts an example roadway typology from the Livable Streets Design Guide.

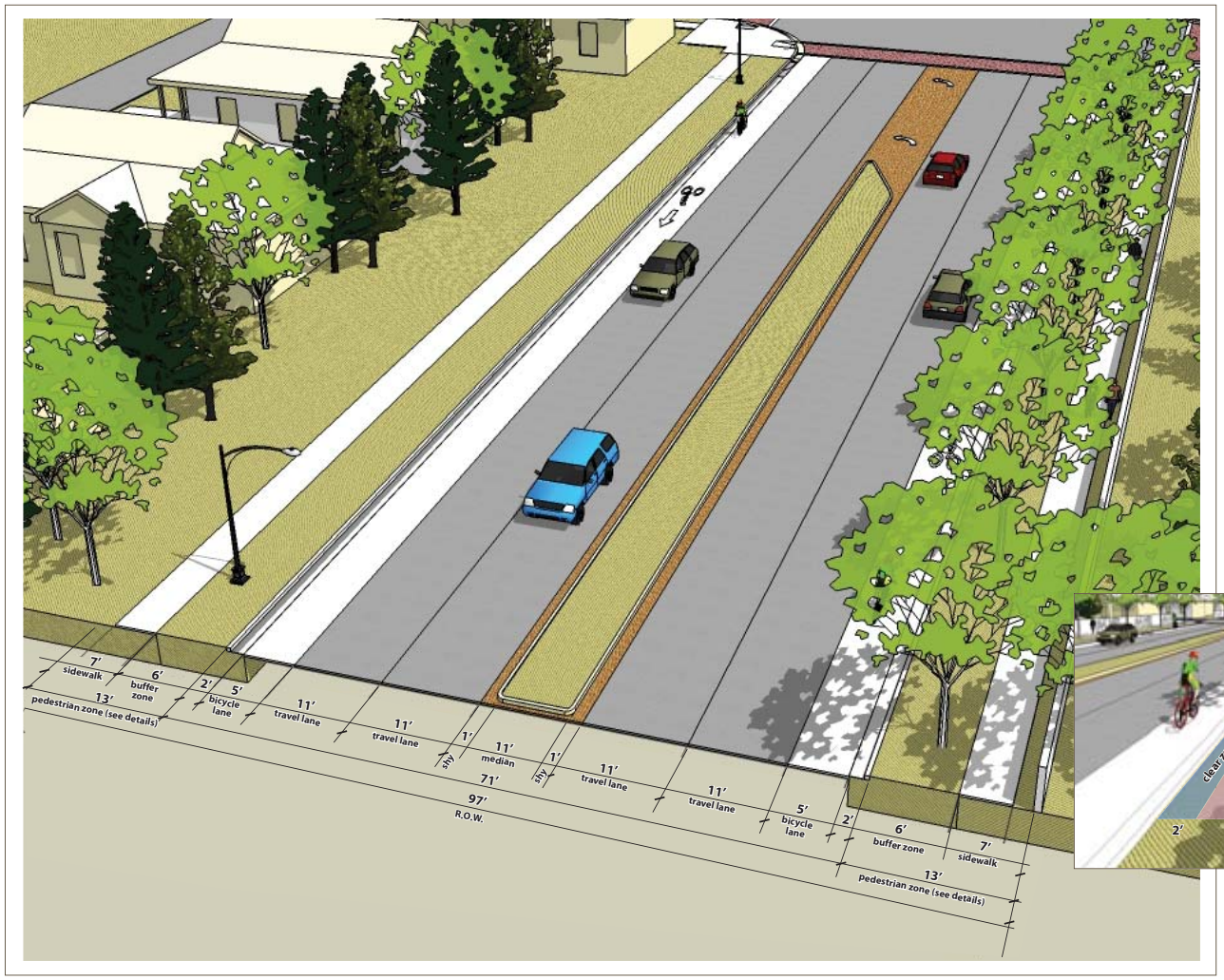
Photo: Detatched walkways and landscape buffers help to protect pedestrians from vehicles

Mobility Management

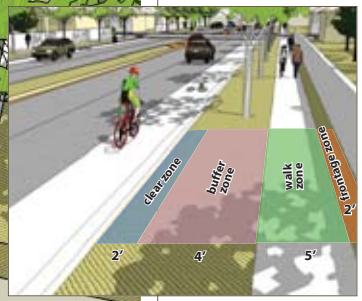
Mobility management is a concept that focuses on using all available resources to augment and advance mobility for all people. Several strategies are typically used to meet the needs of citizens from all walks of life. In 2009, COMPASS, through a Federal grant, developed the Mobility Management

FIGURE 3D: EXAMPLE OF MASTER STREET MAP ROADWAY TYPOLOGY

2.8 STREET DESIGN: RESIDENTIAL ARTERIAL



Design Element	Typical
Design/Operating Speed	35 mph
Number of Travel Lanes (per direction)	2
Travel Lane Dimensions	11′
Center Turn Lane Dimensions	11′
Right Turn Lanes	Allowed for heavy turning movements or heavy truck traffic
Medians	11′, to be substituted with turn lanes at intersections
Median Openings	for cross streets only when medians used
Bicycle Lanes	5′
On-Street Parking	Permitted, not typical; but possible 7′ parallel when used (includes gutter pan width)
Drainage	curb and gutter
Buffer Area	6′ (see clear zone and buffer zone below)
Sidewalk	5′ minimum recommended (see walk zone dimension below; frontage zone allows shy area from sidewalk as needed)
Intersection Control	signals or stops (stops on cross streets only)
Lighting Standards	vehicle/roadway only



Pedestrian Zone

This is an illustrative legend to explain how the pedestrian zone is broken down: the colors do ***NOT*** indicate color-based surface treatments.

- Clear zone: 2′
- Buffer Zone: 4′
- Walk Zone: 5′ minimum recommended
- Frontage Zone: 2′ for utility placement and buffer from walls

The landscaping and enhanced pedestrian zone treatments depicted in the cross-sections depend on future funding and future maintenance by a developer or local jurisdiction. These costs are not borne by ACHD. Street trees placed in six (6)-foot buffer (combined Clear and Buffer Zones) require root barriers; or, city/county/developer can provide additional two (2) feet of right-of-way — see ACHD Tree Planting Policy.

ADOPTED MAY 27, 2009

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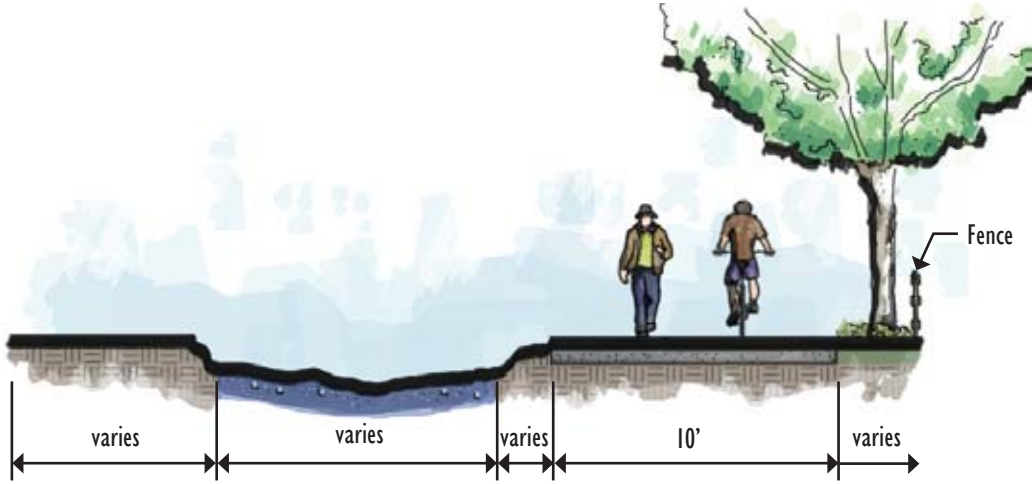
Source: Residential Arterial, ACHD Livable Street Design Guide, May 2009.

Development Guidebook to help local governments establish partnerships and collaborate to provide the most efficient transportation system. The guidebook is a resource manual of best practices that incorporates transit access, mobility enhancements, and site and road design. The Guidebook includes a checklist for local governments, developers, and others to incorporate access and mobility into land use decisions. The Guidebook also explores how providing mode choices helps to serve all roadway users.

Roadways to Bikeways

In May 2009, a long-range master plan for bicycle facilities in Ada County was adopted by the ACHD Commission. The Roadways to Bikeways Plan provides a broad vision, policy, and goals and objectives for how the ACHD can facilitate and improve conditions for bicycling in Ada County. The Plan designates dedicated bicycle facilities within a quarter-mile from 95% of Ada County residents; it will connect all parts of the County. The adopted bicycle master plan guides future investments in the bicycle system on roadways: to enhance and expand the existing on-street bikeway network, fill-in gaps, address constrained areas, provide for greater local and regional connectivity and encourage more bicycling. The Plan also provides basis for signed, shared roadways, bicycle boulevard designations, and a variety of programs and policies to allow and promote safe, efficient, and convenient bicycle travel. In 2012, ACHD also adopted the Downtown Meridian Neighborhood Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, which identifies safety and connectivity needs within the downtown area. Within Meridian, there are currently 14 miles of bike lanes and 5.25 miles of bike routes. A bicycle map, available on the ACHD website, shows the current and planned bicycle routes.

FIGURE 3E: SHARED-USE PATHWAY ALONG WATERWAY



Source: Updated graphic from the Meridian Pathway Master Plan, 2010.

Pathway System and Sidewalks

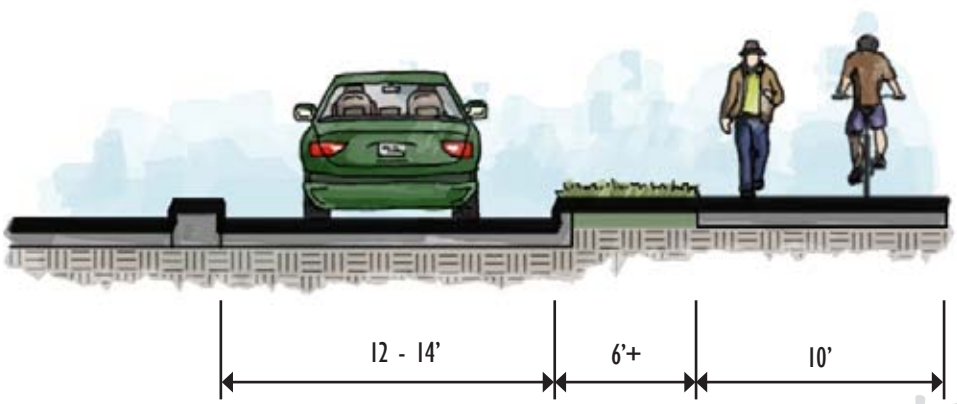
The Meridian Pathways Master Plan is a guide for pathway development over the next 20 to 50 years. The Plan proposes an extensive pathway network stemming from the existing creeks, canals and other drainage or irrigation laterals within and around the City of Meridian. The Plan includes an inventory of existing pathways and micro-pathways, as well as a comprehensive network of future pathways that will connect residents to schools, parks, businesses, neighborhoods, and various recreation and entertainment destinations.

The City of Meridian currently maintains nine pathways, including the Fothergill Pathway, the Bear Creek Pathway, the Blackstone Pathway, the Locust Grove Pathway, the H.R. Bud Porter Pathway, the Diane & Winston Moore Pathway, the Five Mile Creek Pathway from Pine to Badley, the Jackson Drain

Connection, and the Lochsa Falls/Paramount Pathway. Today, these pathways primarily serve as a recreational amenity, but they are also used for commuters going to and from work and school. The Pathways Master Plan includes detailed maps and design standards for future pathways in the City.

As an offshoot of the Meridian Pathways Master Plan, the City also finalized a Rail with Trail Action Plan in early 2010. The Action Plan takes a closer look at the Union Pacific Rail Corridor, presents a conceptual alignment for a multi-use pathway paralleling the tracks from McDermott Road to Eagle Road, and proposes strategies for implementation of the future facility. In 2014, the City received a Transportation Alternatives Projects (TAP) grant to study the trail/arterial crossings near the railroad tracks. Additional local and federal grant money is being pursued for design and construction of the trail.

FIGURE 3F: TYPICAL ON-STREET MULTI-USE PATHWAY



Source: Updated graphic from the Meridian Pathway Master Plan, 2010.

ACHD has a dedicated pool of funds for projects that expand and enhance a safe, efficient, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle network for all residents of Ada County. These pedestrian and bicycle projects are known as Community Programs. ACHD currently offers a Community Programs application for pedestrian and traffic calming projects which gives citizens, neighborhood associations, and land use agencies the ability to apply for projects. As of 2010, a target of 5% of the annual Integrated Five Year Work Plan capital funds are dedicated to Community Programs, which typically equates to $1.5 - $2 million per year. In addition, half of the local vehicle registration fee money goes toward Community Programs each year.

Through public outreach programs, the community has previously highlighted the need for more quality parks, recreation programs, pathways, and other public amenities. The Treasure Valley Futures Program Community Outreach emphasized the community's interest in more pedestrian linkages and enhanced design standards. The City is interested in making these linkages when opportunities present themselves. The City's Unified Development Code requires sidewalks and micro-pathways be installed with new subdivisions. Through ACHD's Community Programs, a group of select community members have identified gaps in the pedestrian pathway and sidewalk system. These gaps now await improvement.

Transit

Valley Regional Transit (VRT) is the regional public transportation authority for Ada and Canyon counties. VRT does not currently provide a fixed-line bus service in Meridian. However, the City is currently working with VRT to design

and then implement a fixed-line bus system. Annually, the City contributes to an inter-county transit service that runs between Nampa-Caldwell and Meridian-Boise. Park-and-ride lots serve as the primary stop for the inter-county bus.

Two City Council members serve on the VRT Board which establishes policy and guides the strategic priorities for public transportation. VRT has an approved plan to develop a regional public transportation system in the Treasure Valley. The plan, called ValleyConnect, calls for bus services in all cities in Ada and Canyon counties.

Commuteride and Carpools

ACHD operates a Commuteride vanpool service in Ada County where each van accommodates 11 to 14 people. The Commuteride program provides ride matching services that connect commuters with similar home and work locations and schedules. Similarly, Commuteride helps businesses plan a customized vanpool service for businesses and their employees. Commuteride Carpool and Vanpool Service is a cooperative effort between ACHD, VRT, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHA).

Park-and-Ride Lots

Park-and-ride lots are a service provided by ACHD. The lots offer a place for commuters to park and collectively ride to work in a prearranged carpool or vanpool. Existing park-and-ride lots are located at Gem Street between Main Street and Meridian Road; Overland Road and SH 69 (Country Terrace); Overland Road and Eagle Road (Rackham Way); and at St. Luke's Regional Medical Center (Eagle Road/I-84). To assist potential users, these lots are marked with green and white directional signs. The City anticipates that additional park-and-ride lots will be necessary in the future and will coordinate with ACHD on siting these future lots as development demands.

Park-and-ride lots are a service provided by ACHD. The lots offer a place for commuters to park and collectively ride to work in a prearranged carpool or vanpool.

Air Travel

The City of Meridian does not have an airport within the City limits or Area of City Impact. However, the Boise Airport (BOI) provides passenger and freight service to the citizens and local businesses. BOI is the only public, general aviation and commercial airport located within Ada County. The airport is located approximately ten miles east of Meridian off I-84. BOI serves over three million passengers annually. It is also home to the Idaho Air National Guard and the National Interagency Fire Center. There are also airports just west of Meridian, including the Nampa Airport (MAN) and Caldwell Industrial Airport (EUL), providing professional pilots, businessmen, corporate, industrial and recreational aircraft owners aviation options.

Rail

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) owned Boise Cutoff spur rail line runs east–west and bisects the City between Cherry Lane and Franklin Road. In 2009, the Boise Valley Railroad began operation along the spur line to provide freight movement to industrial customers. Today, WATCO Companies has a long-term lease with UPRR to operate the Cutoff in Meridian.

In 2009, a preliminary study was completed by the region's planning organization (COMPASS) to determine the feasibility of a regional high capacity mass transit line. The High Priority Corridor Study identified the Boise Cutoff as the primary candidate for a future transit line. A future multi-use pathway (rail with trail) is also in the planning stages along the rail line. Meridian's current Comprehensive Plan and the land uses along this corridor reflect the anticipated multi-modal uses along the rail corridor.

Community Design

Community design tends to focus on elements of the natural and built environment that contribute value to living, working and playing in the community. One could make an argument that all of the components in this report should be analyzed in this section. It is true that most all of the other components (land use, transportation, housing, etc.) factor into community design. However, for the purposes of this report, community design includes analysis primarily on design review, sustainability, livability, healthy initiatives, and arts and community events. These terms are all inter-related and are very subjective; the terms often mean different things and/or are more or less important to different people and groups. The goal of this section of the report is to explain how the community has come together to define what community design means and frame how it works in Meridian. As the City moves forward with the Comprehensive Plan policies, it will use this framework to analyze and develop potential strategies for the City.

The inherent goal of community design is to improve on the livability and quality of life for not only current, but also future generations of Meridian residents. In this section of the report, a description of the current policies, initiatives and programs that contribute to community design and quality of life are presented. Like the other elements analyzed in this report, the components of this chapter directly shape the look, feel and function of the community known as Meridian.

Photo: Community design provides flexibility to be creative, while protecting neighboring investments and community values

A large portion of this section of the report is dedicated to the City's design review process. Design review is a process that applies design review procedures, guidelines, and standards for the review of outdoor projects and physical development. Essentially, it is a discretionary review of the aesthetic aspects of physical development. The design review examines the physical and functional relationships of the various components of development and works in tandem with adopted zoning codes and use standards.

Community design also involves preserving and enhancing unique and extraordinarily valuable areas of the City. Basically, community design provides a means to maintain the unique characteristics of the City, and to improve the built environment for today and tomorrow.

This section also addresses livability and sustainability, two buzzwords in society today. In Meridian, livability and sustainability go hand-in-hand with a healthy community, including physical, social, and mental health. Arts, community events and celebrations all play a role in making Meridian livable. A truly healthy community is one that is sustainable long-term, working with its current residents to define what elements are key to providing a high quality of life today and for future generations.

When the 2002 version of the Comprehensive Plan was developed, citizen groups met to discuss issues and concerns regarding community character. Issues related to development included infilling or increasing density within the city limits and preserving habitats and natural areas. These issues will be addressed later in the report. Many stakeholders thought that particular areas within the City were under-used and that perhaps, these should be the first areas considered for redevelopment rather than farmlands/green fields. Many felt that the City under-utilizes areas already disturbed by development. Residents were also sensitive to preserving open space within urban areas; they felt that by identifying these areas and natural resource areas such as wetlands, riparian areas, and wildlife areas, the City could achieve a balance of open space and new development. Planting more trees and designing a community garden were also discussed. These elements relate directly to community design and creating a high quality of life.

As part of the overall planning process for the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, a sub-committee was established to discuss community design and special sites. This sub-committee identified a number of issues and concerns that focused on design standards, zoning, and the implementation of the current Comprehensive Plan. Standards of specific concern related to gateways and community signage. Citizens suggested establishing a unified sign and gateway theme for the community. Also, they expressed concern regarding the protection of existing special sites like waterways and historic buildings. These concerns form the foundation for the goals, objectives, and action items contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

> A truly healthy community is one that is sustainable long-term, working with its current residents to define what elements are key to providing a high quality of life today and for future generations.

Design Review

In 2007, the City Council determined it was in the best interest of the City to discuss implementing citywide design review. City Planning staff established a design review steering committee to guide them in crafting the program. Members of the design review steering committee, representing various professions from the development community, volunteered numerous hours and offered their expertise, insight, and experience to assist City staff in drafting the guidelines for design review.

Photo: Open space on the Scentsy Campus provides employees opportunities to stay active and enjoy the outdoors

Design review is intended to promote and establish community character and economic stability by ensuring that urban design and architectural principles adhere to community established goals. Design review is also intended to protect the general health, safety and welfare of the citizens by enhancing property values; protecting the natural environment; promoting community pride; protecting historical resources; preserving the aesthetic qualities which contribute to a City's character; and promoting the economic vitality of the community by preserving and creating well-designed commercial and residential developments.

The design guidelines contained in the City's Design Manual implement the vision of the community and enhance quality of life through good design practices. The design guidelines are meant to work in concert with existing development, the Comprehensive Plan, and City Code.

The Design Manual

The Design Manual and design review process establish standards to encourage quality building and site design. They establish a set of guiding principles and flexible standards that encourage creativity as opposed to mandating specific standards. The Design Manual establishes expectations for proposed developments based on the context: urban, rural, or suburban, in which the development is proposed. These design guidelines were developed to address the following:

1. Building Orientation
2. Building Form Scale and Materials
3. Façade Treatment, Entrances and Roofs
4. Pedestrian Pathways and Connectivity
5. Streetscape Design
6. Site Design
7. Parking

In addition to providing the City with a planning tool that uses design guidelines to address the functional and aesthetic qualities and characteristics of development, the Design Manual lays the foundation for growth and development to create attractive, lasting, and quality-built environments that contribute to the progression of Meridian as a livable community.

Prescriptive Standards vs. Guidelines

Design standards vary in the amount of detail and specificity that a community employs. Some communities provide general guidelines for design that allow some autonomy on the part of the developer and designer. The City of Meridian's Design Manual provides mostly general guidelines, but there are some specific design standards that are required through the Unified Development Code. This model provides flexibility and promotes creativity within the community, but sets a minimum standard for certain elements through code. The Manual provides graphic examples to lessen ambiguity for developers. Eliminating guesswork ensures the process is as efficient as possible but still allows for unique projects to be created.

Entryway Corridors

Meridian has designated several arterial roadways as entryway corridors, or gateways into the City. Generally, entryway corridors require additional landscaping along major arterial roadways that lead into and out of Meridian. These gateways have a significant effect on visitors first impression of the City, making them especially important for not only landscaping but also building, parking lot, and public space designs.

Signs

Signs are necessary not only for wayfinding, but also for advertising, marketing and community character purposes. Like landscaping in entryway corridors, signs can impress upon visitors a community's character. Signs should not be a distraction to motorists or pedestrians, or otherwise present a safety hazard by interfering with line-of-sight, blocking traffic control devices, or hampering traffic flow. Likewise, signs should enhance the aesthetics of the community by complimenting building designs and landscaping. Signs should provide assistance to the public and business owners in locating businesses, gathering places, roadways and other attractions. Meridian has taken a hard look at sign regulations to ensure there is balance between safety, advertising, communication, architectural elements, aesthetics, and free speech.

Sustainability

The fundamentals of sustainability within local government center on creating balanced solutions; solutions that deliver services at levels citizens expect; doing so in an environmentally and socially responsible way; and ensuring the best economic choice in the long term. These fundamentals interact in the process of balancing the needs of protecting and enhancing our economy, our natural environment and our community's built environment today and for future generations.

Meridian's popularity as a prime location to build a business and raise a family has required the City to rise to the challenge of providing services at a new level of demand. Commercial and residential developers seek out Meridian because it is "livable." Yet, with growing demand for services, the City is challenged to maintain its well-touted "livability" factor.

Over the last decade, the City of Meridian has assertively stepped-up to the challenges and dynamics of incorporating sustainability concepts in a variety of projects from tackling energy conservation issues; establishing a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment and reclamation facility; to establishing and staffing an Environmental Division within the Public Works Department. "Sustainability and Environmental Awareness" is a stated priority issue of City leadership and will be a dynamic aspect of how future service, programs and projects are understood, created and implemented. Future success bodes well, due to the accomplishments gained in

Photo: The Portico office building achieved a LEED Gold rating

the City's recent past; sustainable practices today are applied in Meridian in a wide variety of ways.

Land Use and Transportation Planning

As part of the its planning process, the City promotes areas of mixed-use development that bring shopping, services and recreation opportunities within walking distance of dwellings. The Ten Mile Interchange Specific Area Plan exemplifies this type of compact, mixed-use development that will allow people to live in an area where they can get to work, go shopping, or go to dinner and see a movie without the need o a car. Mixed-use developments are envisioned to provide the necessary density of homes to support bus and transit programs. Through this type of planning, automobile trips will be reduced along with their emissions.

The City of Meridian continues to promote transportation alternatives. For many years, the City has required that developers install segments of the multi-use pathway system as subdivisions are built. The Master Pathways Plan designates routes for multiple use pathways throughout the City. These pathways are intended for non-motorized usage. Sidewalks, paths, and bike lanes directly adjacent to roadways provide a link between pathways or between a pathway and a destination. People who choose to ride or walk rather than drive are typically replacing short automobile trips, which contribute disproportionately high amounts of pollutant emissions. Since bicycling and walking do not pollute, require no external energy source, and use land efficiently, they effectively move people from one place to another without adverse environmental impacts—they are sustainable forms of transportation. The potential of other modes of transportation, like bus and light-rail, are currently being evaluated.

As mentioned previously in this report, the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) operates a Commuteride vanpool service in Ada County where each van accommodates 11 to 14 people as well as park-and-ride facilities. The City realizes that van and carpooling can help to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, reduce driver stress, and not overwhelm parking in downtown Meridian. To encourage more carpooling, the City has provided designated parking stalls at City Hall for those that carpool to/from work.

Siting, Design and Construction

The design, construction, and operation of buildings impact the environment. In 1998 the U.S. Green Building Council

Photo: Meridian City Hall achieved a LEED Silver rating

developed a set of standards for environmentally sustainable design, construction and operation of buildings. These standards are formalized in certifying a building as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. LEED is a voluntary certification program that can be applied to any building type and any building lifecycle phase. It promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in key areas:

1. Sustainable Sites
2. Water Efficiency
3. Energy and Atmosphere
4. Materials and Resources
5. Indoor Environmental Quality
6. Locations and Linkages
7. Awareness and Education
8. Innovation in Design
9. Regional Priority

Guidelines encouraging buildings to be sited and designed consistent with LEED concepts are included in the City's Design Manual. As an example of Meridian's efforts to be good stewards of the environment and to set a positive example, City Hall was constructed with LEED certification in mind. In 2009, Meridian City Hall achieved the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED), Silver Certification. Among other benefits, Idaho Power Company has calculated City Hall's annual energy savings to be the equivalent of providing power to 56 homes for an entire year.

Energy

In February 2009, the United States Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Included in the Act was the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant

(EECBG) Program which appropriated funds to be used by states, local governments, and tribes for implementing energy conservation strategies and projects. The goal of the EECBG program was to reduce total energy use, reduce greenhouse gas emission and improve energy efficiency in transportation, building, and other sectors.

Through the EECBG, Meridian was awarded $608,000.00 in 2009 for energy efficiency projects. A portion of the funds were used to prepare long and short term energy strategies for the City for increasing efficiency in city and public facilities, thereby reducing City operating costs and reducing greenhouse gases. Funds also went to a variety of constructed improvements, including replacing older less efficient pumps with blowers at the water treatment plant, replacing Main Street lights between Franklin Road and I-84 with more energy efficient bulbs, and upgrading other lighting fixtures at facilities throughout the City:

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

The City of Meridian has begun and completed a number of efforts to reduce and limit the impact of City operations on air quality in the Treasure Valley. The City has done this by working with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), supporting valley-wide initiatives, implementing City policies, evaluating land use applications, and by City departments and contracted entities using best management practices. The following are some of the actions the City has been involved in, or is currently implementing:

1. Town Hall Meetings on Business Emissions: The City has worked with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Idaho Small Business Development Center to give presentations to local businesses on strategies for them to reduce their emissions.

2. Clean Air Zone Idaho: The City of Meridian is a member of the Clean Air Zone Idaho program. This program encourages citizens to avoid idling and "Turn off your engine" while waiting in City parking lots. These signs are placed at all City facilities. This program improves air quality by reducing vehicle emissions.

3. Telecommute to work: The City has instituted a VPN, or virtual private network, that allows city workers to telecommute. The VPN provides remote access to the network, file, and servers through a secure connection, allowing certain employees to perform their work from home or other locations when needed. Every

Photo: No idling of engines helps to reduce air pollution

Community Design

trip eliminated from the City's roadways improves its overall air quality by eliminating vehicle emissions.

4. Radio Read Meters: The City of Meridian's Public Works Department staff utilizes radio read meter technology and in-vehicle mounted computers to transmit and access information in an effort to reduce trips to and from the field and office. This technology not only reduces fuel costs but also pollutant emissions.

5. On-line Business: The City of Meridian has expanded the amount of business that can be conducted with the City on its website. The City recognizes that every transaction that can be done online is a potential trip off the road.

6. Biogas: The City installed biogas conditioning equipment at the Wastewater Treatment Facility, to treat the methane-rich biogas so that it can be used to provide heat to the digesters and wastewater treatment plant buildings. The Public Works Department diverts and utilizes the biogas generated from the anaerobic digesters as an alternative fuel amendment (in lieu of combusting natural gas) in a few of the wastewater treatment plant's boilers. The use of biogas as the heating source for the digestion process saves the City up to $5,000 per month during winter operations.

Wastewater Treatment, Reclamation and Reuse

The Public Works Department Wastewater Division operates and maintains a centralized wastewater treatment facility. This facility is located in northwest Meridian, near the Ustick and Ten Mile intersection. With a vision for sustainability, Meridian became the first city in Idaho to be issued a City-wide Class A Reclaimed Water Permit in 2009. This permit signified a change in how the City uses existing and finite water resources available in the Treasure Valley Aquifer System. The City is now using highly treated, or reclaimed water, instead of irrigation water on selected City parks, the Ten Mile Interchange Landscaping, a commercial car wash, and other open spaces. This conserves ground water and reduces discharge flows into the Boise River. As Meridian is located in an arid climate, reclaimed water is a "drought-proof" water supply that reduces demand on municipal supply, frees up agricultural water for agricultural uses, and lowers effluent flow to the Boise River. It demonstrates economic and environmental sustainability for wastewater treatment plants.

Photo: Reclaimed water system at the Meridian Wastewater Treatment Plant

Community Design

A nutrient recovery process that produces fertilizer was assessed at the Meridian Wastewater Treatment facility through a three-week pilot study in 2009. The study was conducted at no-cost to the City of Meridian as part of a public-private partnership. The study revealed that implementing the process would be effective in generating an environmentally friendly fertilizer through the removal of a percentage of the phosphorus load. The Public Works Department's vision for sustainability holds that "Our Wastewater Treatment Plant, by the year 2030, will be self-sustaining—utilizing closed-looped systems to recycle and/or reuse 80% of the waste stream via water reclamation, co-generation, and nutrient recycling strategies."

Photo: The Idaho Youth Conservation Corp work to clear weeds and plant new foliage along Five Mile Creek

Preservation and Restoration of Natural Resources

A vast majority of Meridian's natural watercourses have been altered by irrigation users. Many residents no longer recognize these creeks and watercourses as natural resources. While Meridian residents and visitors are often denied access and potential benefits from these watercourses and associated floodplains, these same water courses do provide critical irrigation water delivery.

In recent years, there have been renewed efforts to study additional restoration opportunities to improve and reestablish some of the historical and natural conditions of waterways. The City has held conversations on how to better educate the general public about the importance of these waterways for natural conservation, regulatory needs, and for the history of the irrigation districts that support agricultural industry.

During the summer of 2009, the City's Public Works Department, with the assistance of volunteers and members of the Idaho Youth Conservation Corps, oversaw Meridian's first stream restoration project along the Five Mile Creek near Locust Grove Road and Franklin Road. Restoration targeted a 700-linear-foot stretch of the creek. The work helped reshape this portion of the creek to a more natural condition and preserve the floodplain from development. The project was paid for by wetlands mitigation funds from the Idaho Transportation Department. The City plans for more projects like the Five Mile Creek restoration in the future.

Solid Waste

Republic Services is the solid waste collection contractor for the City of Meridian. Republic is dedicated to providing reliable and innovative recycling and waste reduction programs to the City. See Chapter 4, Solid Waste, for more information on recycling efforts.

Community Design

Livability and Quality of Life

As explained at the beginning of the Community Design section, livability and quality of life are hard terms to explain and measure. Benchmarks, or metrics for measuring livability, are difficult to describe. Often places that are livable have the "it" factor. They are the most sought after places to live. For the purposes of this report, livability and quality of life refer to the environmental and social quality of an area as perceived by its residents. Community livability is about creating neighborhoods that are safe, vibrant, attractive, affordable, accessible, cohesive, and full of character. A few key factors that primarily contribute to livability within a community are: health, personal security, overall cleanliness, quality and quantity of social interaction opportunities, entertainment, aesthetics, and existing unique cultural and natural resources. Livability is largely affected by conditions in the public realm—places where people naturally interact with each other and their community—like parks, streets and sidewalks, and other community gathering places. Livability is important because it can maintain or increase property values and business activity, and it can improve public health and safety.

New urbanism (sometimes referred to as Smart Growth and/or Neotraditional Design) is a land use strategy striving to enhance quality of life. New urbanism has gained traction over the past several years, and some of the design elements of New Urbanism are included as part of the City of Meridian's planning documents. Essentially, new urbanism is a land use management strategy that is based on making a community more livable by providing walkable, connected, mixed-use, diverse, sustainable, high-quality neighborhoods that provide a variety of transportation options for everyone.

Although there are no statistical data on Meridian's livability today, one could argue that Meridian's popularity indicates that many of the livability factors are present in most areas of Meridian. This is not to imply that the City should not explore ways to improve our neighborhoods and make them even more livable.

Healthy Initiatives

The impact of the built environment on public health continues to be explored by many organizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines a healthy community as: "A community that is continuously creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources that enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential." The City realizes that it is at the local level that it is imperative to take a proactive approach in addressing the link between the built environment and health.

By 2040 nearly 50% of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65 or under the age 18. Therefore the livable and sustainable community of the future must have physical and social features that benefit people of all ages. When a wide range of needs is addressed, family and individuals have the opportunity to stay and thrive in their communities as they age. Multi-generational planning also builds community. Rather than creating and encouraging social, income, or age-segregating neighborhoods of the past, the City hopes to foster diverse multi-generational neighborhoods that accommodate different lifestyles and stages which contribute to sustainable communities. The City encourages a mix of not only housing options, but also amenities and opportunities for interaction across generations. Today, Meridian does not have a plan to address aging and multi-generational needs.

Through better understanding physical and social needs, building consensus, and developing new shared strategies that link the generations and build more inclusive and sustainable communities, the City can facilitate the creation of neighborhoods that are truly vibrant and healthy.

Central District Health Department (CDHD) reviews development applications and sends comments and conditions back to the City, related to any potential public health issues. CDHD has adopted a policy to further smart growth and sustainable development in southwest Idaho. Not surprisingly, the objective of the policy is to support land development and building decisions that promote improved public health. CDHD recognizes that the built environment has an impact on public health, with links to obesity, diabetes, and asthma, to name a few. This cooperative partnership between the City of Meridian and CDHD is not new, but what is new are some of the policies and principles these agencies are jointly trying to implement.

Photo: Detached pathway along Main Street near the Meridian Interchange

Safe Walking Routes

A healthy community is one that has good connectivity between residential areas and community gathering places, like schools. As part of the development review process, the City regularly requires developers to install sidewalk, micro-pathways and multi-use pathways that connect to school sites. The West Ada School District has walk route maps for their schools which can be found on their website. The City is in regular contact with West Ada School District and ACHD working to fill in gaps in the pedestrian system – particularly near elementary and middle schools. The City and the School District annually partner to compile a list of high priority pedestrian projects for ACHD's Community Programs. The list of priority projects, as well as the Safe Routes Map, is based on concerns City staff and School District employees hear from parents and others in the community. Some programs, like Safe Routes to School, have been around for several years. The City supports the YMCA, via COMPASS, as they administer the Safe Routes to School Program in Ada County. Safe Routes coordinators go to elementary and middle schools in Meridian and educate children on things like bicycle and pedestrian safety. This fun, interactive, educational program has been well received throughout the community.

Photo: Community fishing event

Day Care

Accessible, affordable and quality before- and after-school child care is a necessary component of creating a livable community. A robust local system of child care and early education programs has social, economic and environmental benefits for children, families and the community as a whole. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2012 64.6% of mothers with children under the age of 18 held jobs, and 56.7% of mothers with children under 1 year old held jobs. By providing child care service that is affordable and close (or within) residential areas, child care can contribute to the local economy by supporting parents and local employers. The American Planning Association (APA) has long recognized that child care is a critical component of livable communities. As such, APA advocates for including child care policies within local planning. Local planning policies play an important role in ensuring adequate child care in a community. Creating policies, identifying local resources and working with developers and community partners, the City hopes to have a more proactive and positive influence on the child care programs being provided in the future.

Youth Programs

Meridian prides itself on being a unique city with an abundance of choices that support our commitment to maintaining a safe and caring community and strive to be a place young people feel accepted, respected, and connected. Our city government and civic leaders are extremely pro-active in engaging youth in nearly every aspect of community life, including community service and opportunities to provide a youth perspective in policy making, advocacy, and issues of importance to young people.

As the home to many families of all shares and sizes, Meridian's mission is to be a premier city to live, work and raise a family. Meridian has received recognition from several national award programs and publications. These honors include being selected by Family Circle Magazine as one of their "Top 10 Best Cities for Families," by Money Magazine as one of its "100 Best Places to Live," and by America's Promise Alliance and ING as one of the nation's "100 Best Communities for Young People."

The City of Meridian has developed and maintains several initiatives and organizations focused specifically on youth.

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) is a teen organization that gives a "voice" to our teens and opportunities for them to shape our future. Youth Council members, in graded 9 through 12, meet with the Mayor and other advisors twice

a month to discuss issues and ideas of interest to the youth of Meridian. They are actively involved in many community service projects and events, and with several volunteer and advocacy activities they plan themselves. Events they have planned and participated in have focused on issues important to them as diverse as seatbelt use, texting while driving, smoking and nicotine use, and hunger.

Through the City of Meridian's Youth on Commissions Program, high school students apply and are appointed to seats on City commissions, committees, coalitions, and task forces which serve in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council. These include the Parks and Recreation Commission, Transportation Commission, Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition, Meridian Arts Commission, Historical Preservation Commission, and the Solid Waste Advisory Commission.

To promote advanced education, the City annually offers up to four $1,000 City of Meridian Scholarships to graduating seniors who will be attending accredited colleges or vocational programs. These scholarships are awarded to successful applicants who demonstrate evidence of leadership potential through their community involvement, as well as volunteerism, school activities, or work experience. Additional consideration is given to applicants who have completed the Meridian Police Department's Alive at 25 safe driving courses.

Alive at 25 is a free defensive driving class taught several times a month by Meridian Police officers with the goal of lowering auto accidents involving teens and young adults, ages 14 – 24. Through interactive media segments, workbook exercises, class discussions and role playing, this four-hour course helps young drivers develop convictions and strategies that will keep them safer on the road.

Younger children in Meridian also have opportunities to engage with City government. For a number of years, the Mayor has invited presidents and CEOs of local companies to not just sponsor a book but to also join her in co-hosting the Mayor's and CEO's Kids Book Club. Each month during the school year, students in grades 3, 4, and 5 gather to discuss a pre-selected book with Mayor Tammy and each respective month's "leader-reader." The goal is to impart on our youth the importance of being a good reader, as well as the pure enjoyment to be found through reading a good book. Students who actively participate get to keep the hardcover books they are provided with, therefore building their own home libraries with high-quality books. To further promote reading and literacy, a Little Free Library is to be placed in Meridian City Hall's outdoor plaza, serving as a free all-hours community book exchange for children and adults alike.

Through the City of Meridian's Youth on Commissions Program, high school students apply and are appointed to seats on City commissions, committees, coalitions, and task forces which serve in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council.

Meridian's Parks and Recreation Department maintains 20 city parks, which feature child-friendly amenities such as playground equipment; ball fields; basketball, tennis, pickle ball, bocce and volleyball courts; Frisbee golf cages; game tables; splash pads; horseshoe pits; and skateboard ramps. The department also offers a variety of enrichment programs, classes, and day camps for children and teens, primarily offered at the Meridian Community Center the City

owns and maintains, located in Old Town Meridian adjacent to the Centennial Park.

Apart from programs and organizations offered through the City of Meridian, local children and teens have access to the Meridian Boys and Girls Club and the Homecourt YMCA. The Meridian Boys and Girls Club offers two sessions of kindergarten as well as after-school and school vacation care and activities for school-aged children. The Homecourt Y serves Meridian residents and is a sports complex featuring four full-sized basketball courts, six regulation volleyball courts, and a state-of-the-art fitness center. Both facilities are operating at nearly full capacity and the Boys and Girls Club is looking to expand. In addition, the Treasure Valley YMCA is looking to build their next facility in the City of Meridian. It is possible that both projects would include a partnership with the City of Meridian who is also in dire need of additional space for indoor sports and other indoor activities.

Senior Programs

On the other end of the age spectrum, older adults must interact with the built environment in ways that reflect their physical capabilities and lifestyle. Although they may have more time after retirement to enjoy parks and other recreational activities, conditions such as chronic diseases and limited vision may limit mobility. Providing accessible and suitable housing options that are easily accessible to community destinations are key to allowing older adults to remain independent, active and engaged with the community. Housing for seniors that is integrated into the fabric of the community is becoming increasingly important as the Baby Boom Generation enters retirement.

In the early 1960s a group of seniors started meeting at the old Occident Club once a month for potlucks and cards. It became apparent that Meridian Seniors needed a place to call their own and they began to raise money with various fund raising events. The Meridian Senior Center is now a non-profit community center that enhances the lives of its members through traditional activities. These activities include bingo, pinochle, bridge, art, quilting, and exercise and sewing classes. The center also provides some specialized activities and events, such as tax preparation assistance, Alzheimers' Caregivers Support Group, attorney visits, and blood pressure and blood sugar testing. The programs are designed to meet the physical, emotional, and social well-being of senior adults over the age of 60.

Photo: The Meridian Senior Center in Kleiner Park

In May 2012, the Meridian Senior Center built a new 13,800 square-foot facility in Meridian at Julius M. Kleiner Park, near Fairview Avenue and Eagle Road. The new center was made possible by a generous land and building donation from the Julius M. Kleiner Family Trust. The new center includes a main dining area with two state-of-the-art kitchens, complete with the latest equipment, an arts and crafts room, a cards and game room, a health screening room, an indoor walking track, and office space. The facility is open to Meridian residents and those that live in the surrounding community. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Kleiner Park Center is the place to be for seniors in the community.

Success Stories

Healthy behavior is a combination of knowledge, practices and attitudes that together contribute to motivate actions regarding health. The City of Meridian can learn from other communities' success in creating and promoting programs that encourage a healthy and vibrant community. Some of these success stories include programs and projects that incorporate things like community gardens, sharing of resources (e.g. – vehicles and parking lots), cooperatives where local goods, services and wares can be sold or traded, branch libraries, and additional policies that encourage socially and environmentally conscious design and construction projects. The City strives to better understand the impact of neighborhood design on residents' ability to be physically active, the impacts of development on natural systems, and the effects of community design on overall community health. By taking actions that promote and preserve good health, Meridian should be a community that sustains well into the future.

Photo: Concerts on Broadway event in front of Meridian City Hall, hosted by the Meridian Arts Commission

Arts, Entertainment and Community Events

Meridian Arts Commission

Meridian envisions a vibrant arts and entertainment scene that integrates the arts experience into everyday life and enhances the spirit of the City. The Meridian Arts Commission (MAC) was created in 2006, and since then it has provided the community with visual, performing, and musical arts opportunities throughout the year.

Through the Art in Public Spaces collection, Meridian City Hall integrates visual art into its functional spaces on hallway walls in the building. City Hall also has dedicated space in which art is the function: Initial Point Gallery, located on the

third floor. MAC curates and installs monthly art exhibits in Initial Point Gallery, featuring the work of Treasure Valley artists, and schedules an opening reception for each show, many of which include performances by local musicians.

MAC encourages children to take part in the arts by partnering with Treasure Valley Youth Theater, a Meridian company. The inaugural performance was "Peter Pan, Jr.," presented in March 2014, to rave reviews. In the summer, MAC presents Concerts on Broadway, a popular free outdoor concert series on the steps of City Hall.

A major public art piece, "Under the Sun and Dreaming," by C. J. Rench, is slated for installation at the gateway to downtown Meridian, at the south end of the Split Corridor. Additional public artwork with a birds of prey theme, designed by local artist Alicia Dyson, will soon take wing on the overpass of the Meridian Road Interchange, in conjunction with the overpass construction.

Meridian History Center and Heritage Programs

The Meridian History Center is a volunteer-operated education center and office located on the first floor of City Hall. These volunteers maintain, display and archive records, photographs, and memorabilia relating to Meridian's rich history.

In the late 1980s, the City established the Historical Preservation Commission to preserve the character and fabric of historically significant areas and structures within the City of Meridian and to honor and preserve its rich heritage for future generations. The Historical Preservation Commission consists of five members serving three-year terms. At least two appointed members have professional training or experience in the disciplines of architecture, history, architectural history, urban planning, archaeology, engineering, law or other historic preservation related disciplines.

Meridian remains true to its identity by remembering its past while looking towards the future. In addition to having a history center and art gallery located inside Meridian City Hall, monuments in Generations Plaza, along Meridian Road, and in the City Hall Plaza pay tribute in words and photos to Meridian's earliest settlers, Meridian's evolving history, and past City leaders.

Photo: The Meridian History Center located within City Hall

Community Design

Photo: The Meridian Historical Walking Tour is a self guided tour of historic structures in downtown Meridian

distinct and alive, giving it a rich quality of life. The sense of community is evident in many celebrations and events, neighborhoods, and public institutions.

Community Events

The community celebrates several traditional annual events including Dairy Days Celebration, Chili Cook-Off, Firefighter's Salmon BBQ, Concerts on Broadway Series, Family Fourth of July Extravaganza, National Night Out, Free Family Fishing Day, and Winterland Parade and a Christmas Tree Lighting Celebration. Attendance at these community celebrations shows how engaged and important these events are to the business community and citizens.

The visual arts, performing arts, community events, and Meridian's heritage are integral components of the community's identity. As this section reports, the culture in Meridian is

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What Services are Provided in Meridian?

Public Services

This chapter discusses the characteristics of public utilities, facilities and other services provided in the Meridian area. As required by State Statute, schools, recreation, and other public services, facilities and utility components of the Comprehensive Plan are analyzed here. As part of the public services section, the report also outlines the way the City is governed, including its various boards and commissions.

The City itself has several departments, each responsible for providing specific services. This chapter will not only detail which services each City Department provides, but also services that are provided and managed by other jurisdictions, agencies or service providers. A current inventory of infrastructure like parks and pathways, fire stations, schools, and other public services are explained.

This chapter also reports how non-private service and utility providers are meeting needs today and how they plan on meeting future demand for services. Other services, like transportation, youth programs, and senior activities (see Chapter 3) were explained previously in this report and are not duplicated here.

Photo: Meridian City Hall from the south

Municipal Government, City Hall

Meridian City Hall is a three-story 100,000 square-foot building located in downtown that serves as the hub of Meridian's municipal government. City Hall currently houses nine City departments serving as a convenient "one-stop-shop" for citizens seeking services including:

1. Information Services: The Information Services is comprised of two divisions: the Clerk's Office and Information Technology. The City Clerk's Office provides support and administrative services to the Mayor and City Council, all operating departments, and the public, while maintaining for the City an essential, formal link with citizens, area businesses, other jurisdictions and a wide variety of public agencies. Information Technology provides technical assistance to City staff on all things technology, including: phones, computers and other electronics.

2. Community Development: The Community Development Department is comprised of three divisions, including: Building Services, Land Development Services, and Planning. Building Services is responsible for activities associated with structural, fire, electrical, mechanical and plumbing permits for residential, commercial and industrial projects. Land Development Services is responsible for plan review and coordination with the Public Works Department, to ensure that new developments are properly serviced by utilities like sewer, water and drainage. The Planning Division is divided into two groups: Current Planning and Comprehensive Planning. Current Planning is primarily responsible for processing development applications and assisting property owners and developers through the land use permitting and entitlement process, and over-the-counter inquiries. Comprehensive Planning is involved with long-range and specific area plans, transportation planning, community development, and administration of the Community Development Block Grant program.

3. Public Works: The Public Works Department consists of seven divisions: Engineering, Construction, Administration, Environmental, Business Operations, Water, and Wastewater. The mission of Public Works is to anticipate, plan and provide exemplary public services and facilities that support the needs of a growing community in an efficient, customer-focused and financially responsible manner. Public Works cooperates with other agencies such as the Ada County Highway District to coordinate efforts on utility work and transportation services. More discussion on the Public Works Department occurs later in this chapter.

4. Finance/Purchasing/Billing: The Finance Department is the general business management arm of city government, providing specific financial and accounting services for elected officials, City employees, and the citizens of Meridian. Basic services of the Finance Department include: budgeting, financial analysis and reporting, utility billing, accounts payable, purchasing and payroll, monitoring state and city rules and regulations, and maintenance of sound internal controls. The mission of Purchasing is to provide contract management, and procurement services through competitive public bidding to obtain maximum value for the tax dollar and to provide service to all City of Meridian departments and the public in a timely, courteous and ethical manner.

> "To understand the heart and mind of a person, look not at what he has already achieved, but at what he aspires to do."
> Khalil Gibran

5. Parks and Recreation Department: The Parks and Recreation Department's mission is to enhance the community's quality of life by providing well-designed atnd properly maintained parks and recreational opportunities for all citizens. More discussion on the Parks and Recreation Department occurs later in this chapter.

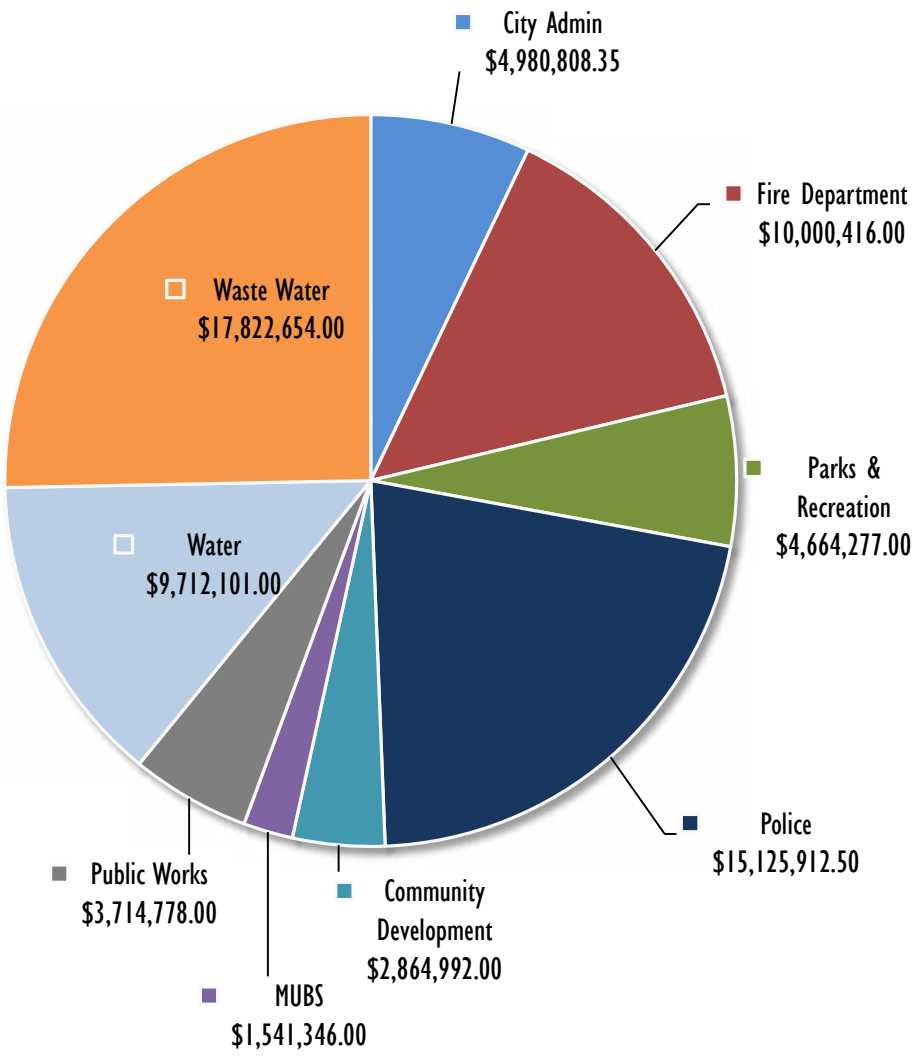
6. Fire Department: The Fire Departments mission is to protect and enhance the community through professionalism and compassion. More discussion on the Fire Department and the services it provides occurs later in this chapter.

7. Human Resources: Human Resources assists all City departments in determining staffing needs and coordinates recruitment to fill those needs. Recruitment efforts include working closely with the Directors of each department within the City to post and advertise open positions, processing and reviewing applications, scheduling and conducting interviews, tracking the process of all applicants, and providing information on the progress to interested parties.

8. City Attorney's Office: The City Attorney's Office provides leadership to the City and works as a strategic business partner with managers and employees to help the City achieve its mission, goals and objectives. The City Attorney's Office proactively seeks to understand and meet the needs of its customers, elected officials, and employees of the City by providing expertise, direction, support, and training in the areas of law while ensuring a safe, fair, and legally-compliant work environment.

9. Mayor's Office: The Mayor's Office focus is on becoming the Star of the New West, transforming Meridian into a 21st century city. Meridian is uniquely conducive to supporting a broad array of business activities while maintaining the high quality lifestyle and focus on family so greatly valued. Fulfilling the needs of businesses and families begins with having a safe and caring community that provides quality education, family-wage jobs, cutting-edge health care, diverse housing options, a trained workforce, and an abundance of recreation, shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities. Meridian seeks to be a vibrant community whose vision is to be the premier city to live, work and raise a family. The Mayor's Offices' main commitment is to help neighbors realize this vision.

FIGURE 4A: CITY OF MERIDIAN EXPENDITURES BY DEPARTMENT



Source: Finance Department, FY2014 Meridian Budget Summary.

Services

The City of Meridian's mission for 2025 is to continue to be a safe, attractive, and inviting community that is full of diverse activities. Meridian delivers quality service, planning, and fiscal responsibility with open spaces, strong partnerships, and various educational opportunities. Culture, unique business, venture, and an abundant choice of jobs make Meridian not just a destination, but a lifestyle.

Mayor and City Council

Meridian uses the Mayor-Council form of local government. In Meridian, the Council, which includes the Mayor, possesses both legislative and executive authority. The City Council adopts codes that govern the City in addition to applicable state and federal law. The Council also deals with property acquisition, serves on regional commissions and boards, and must approve of mayoral nominations. The Council also exercises primary control over the municipal budget.

The Mayor and a representative from each of the six council seats are elected by the citizens, each term consisting of four years. Elections for City Council are held every two years with three of the six seats up for election. Mayoral elections are held every four years.

Commissions, Committees and Boards

Citizen involvement is an essential ingredient for strong local government. The City of Meridian promotes citizen involvement by inviting residents to serve on a variety of boards, commissions, and committees designed to assist City leaders in information gathering and deliberative processes. Some of the volunteer boards and commission in Meridian are:

1. Parks & Recreation Commission: This all volunteer commission focuses its efforts on park planning, capital improvements, pathways, policies, recreation programs, and budget. The Parks & Recreation Commission makes policy recommendations to the City Council as they relate to the parks system. The Commission is composed of at least five, and up to nine members that are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. Each member serves a three-year term with no maximum on number of years of service.

Citizen involvement is an essential ingredient for strong local government. The City of Meridian promotes citizen involvement by inviting residents to serve on a variety of boards, commissions, and committees designed to assist City leaders in information gathering and deliberative processes.

2. Planning & Zoning Commission: This all volunteer commission advises the City Council on planning policies and goals, development projects and issues related to land use, zoning, transportation, and housing issues, as framed by Meridian's Comprehensive Plan. There are five members of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Each member is appointed by the Mayor, with confirmation by the Council. Terms for Commissioner are six years, with no maximum.

3. Meridian Arts Commission: This all volunteer commission works on arts/cultural policy and promotes public awareness and participation in the arts. The purpose of this advisory commission is to highlight the City's rich cultural resources, enhance the City's aesthetic environment, and promote the development of economic, educational, recreation, and tourism

opportunities within the city through the advancement of publicly accessible arts. The Commission consists of a minimum of five members and no more than nine members at any time. Each commissioner serves a term of three years, except for the youth member that serves a one-year term. One member of the City Council serves as a liaison and ex-officio member of the Commission.

4. Historical Preservation Commission: The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) works to preserve the character and fabric of historically significant areas and structures within the City of Meridian to honor and preserve its rich heritage for future generations. The HPC is advisory to the City Council and submits an annual report regarding the Commission's activities and accomplishments. There are currently six volunteer members on the HPC, appointed by the Mayor with confirmation from the City Council. Terms of office for the HPC are 3-years.

5. Transportation Commission: The Transportation Commission researches and makes recommendations to the City Council related to traffic safety issues, pedestrian and bicyclist concerns, speed limits, public transportation, and priority transportation projects. The Commission provides a forum for cooperation, coordination, and communication between the City, other governmental agencies, and citizens and organizations concerned with the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This Commission is made up of nine voting and six ex-officio members which include: West Ada School District, ACHD, COMPASS, ITD, VRT and a City Councilor. Transportation Commission members are comprised of four citizens, three business owners/employees, and two members with some technical/educational expertise in transportation. Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and City Council by resolution.

6. Impact Fee Advisory Committee: This Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the City Council regarding existing and proposed impact fees and fee structures to help ensure that growth pays its own way. This is an ad-hoc committee established by the Mayor and City Council.

7. Solid Waste Advisory Commission: This Commission's purpose is to propose and recommend to the Mayor and the City Council any new or amended rules, regulations, policies, and fees relating to the orderly and efficient administration of the City's fully-automated solid waste collection system. The Commission consists of a minimum of five members but not more than nine members serving a term of 3 years. Appointed members are selected from: one Utilities Billing Manager or designee, one Director of Public Works or designee, one City Attorney or designee, and at least three but not more than five local citizens.

In addition to the groups listed above, other organizations like the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, the Mayor's Faith Ambassador Council, and the Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition allow citizens to be actively involved in serving various needs throughout the community.

Photo: City of Meridian water reservoir

Public Works

Water and Sewer

The City of Meridian owns and operates a domestic water system, sewage collection system, and a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) serving the residents of Meridian.

The Water Division provides customer service and operates and maintains public wells, the distribution system, and reservoirs. The Wastewater Division provides customer service and operates and maintains the collection system, lift stations, and the wastewater treatment plant.

The Water, Wastewater and Environmental divisions are part of the Public Works Department, which is responsible for reviewing water, wastewater, and environmental related issues for new developments, short and long range planning of utilities, administration, rate analysis, operation of water and wastewater facilities, engineering and utility coordination, special projects as assigned by the Mayor and City Council, and more. Unlike most communities outside of Ada County, the City of Meridian Public Works Department does not have jurisdiction over roads and highways within the City. Public Works does not have jurisdiction over pressurized irrigation systems or irrigation canals either.

Water Division

Supply and Distribution

The Meridian water system consists of a large network of deep wells, booster pump stations, reservoirs and over 400 miles of six-inch to 16-inch pipe line. Twenty wells, ranging in capacity from 800 to over 2,500 gallons per minute (gpm), are located throughout the City. A 500,000-gallon elevated storage reservoir is located near Meridian Speedway. A two-million gallon, ground-level reservoir is located near the northwest corner of Meridian and Ustick Roads. Another large tank is under construction near Locust Grove and Victory Roads. The cumulative capacity of existing wells is over 40 million gallons per day (mgd).

Wells and reservoirs are linked via a telemetric Supervisory Controls and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system to a central computer at the Water Department. This system controls reservoir levels, well on-off cycles, and pressure set points. Several wells are equipped with standby generators in the event of power failure. A Water System Master Plan Update, including a new computer model was completed in 2012.

Based on 2013 water use records, Meridian used 3.1 billion gallons of drinking water for its household and commercial uses, which is approximately 8.7 million gallons of water each day. While all subdivisions constructed after 1993 were required to install pressurized irrigation systems using non-potable water, significant irrigation demands exist from residential neighborhoods that were constructed prior to that time. As shown in Table 4A, winter water demand in the City is about 173 million gallons/month while summertime demand is 363 million gallons/month. Summer irrigation activity increases demand by 190 million gallons/month. Meridian is currently researching the feasibility of providing additional irrigation supply or capacity to landscapes that are currently served by Irrigation Districts.

In order to keep up with water demand, the City has constructed, on average, one new well per year, each of which is funded by connection fees charged to new development. Water line extensions to new developments are generally paid for and constructed by developers. Although the City plans for new wells and reservoirs, the specific locations of those facilities are largely dictated by growth patterns. The water system will be expanded to meet the demands of growth while ensuring that new development pays for those additional required facilities.

TABLE 4A: MERIDIAN WATER CONSUMPTION

Domestic Well Impacts	
Winter Average	173 million gal/month
Summer Agerage	363 million gal/month
Summer Irrigation Activity (ground water):	
Inceased Demand (over winter)	190 million gal/month
Potential Conservation	1.14 billion gal/year

Source: Meridian Public Works Department, April 2014.

Photo: City of Meridian Water treatment facility

Wastewater Division

Sewer Collection

The sewer (also known as wastewater) collection system in the City consists of over 390 miles of eight-inch to 36-inch pipe and nine lift (pump) stations of various sizes. Sewage flows by gravity to the wastewater treatment plant located west of Ten Mile Road, approximately ¼ mile north of Ustick Road. In 2010 JUB Engineers completed a Sewer Master Plan Update which included a new computer simulation for modeling sewer impacts. The computer simulation allows Public Works to conduct sewer modeling as new development applications are proposed and are built. The model helps

staff identify priority areas for development in the City as well as segments of the existing sewage collection system that are approaching capacity. Capital improvements can then be prioritized to upgrade the lines that are projected to reach capacity. The next Sewer Master Plan update will occur in 2015. No new City-funded sewer trunks or expansions are planned as of January 2014, but the City actively evaluates existing infrastructure and replaces or upgrades as appropriate.

Sewer main replacements are necessary to replace aging infrastructure in the sewer collection system. Replacement projects are identified in a variety of methods, most commonly through the sewer TV and cleaning program and thorough analysis of the collection system by the Wastewater Division and Public Works technical staff. Capital funds are utilized to design and construct sewer infrastructure replacements identified throughout the City, including replacements of the sewer collection system infrastructure in the downtown sewer corridor. As new developments are proposed in the downtown sewer corridor, Public Works staff will research the need for additional capacity in the sewer system and the Sewer Main Replacement budget will allow Public Works to plan and design required improvements.

Notable upcoming sewer projects include, but are not limited to: the 8th Street Rehabilitation projects and the NE 3rd Street Sewer Replacement. Due to the magnitude of improvements required for these projects, funding and construction will occur over several years. Sewer line extensions provide new sewer infrastructure and improvements throughout the City. One major driver for these types of projects is Ada County Highway District (ACHD) road reconstruction. As ACHD projects are scheduled, City staff looks for deficiencies in capacity or improved operational opportunities that can be completed in conjunction with ACHD projects. By designing

Photo: City of Meridian wastewater treatment facility

improvements in coordination with road construction, the City saves money on pipe installation by removing the need to restore pavement and pay for traffic control. This also minimizes inconvenience to the travelling public.

Sewer Treatment

The present wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) began operation in 1979 with a rated capacity of 2.8 mgd. The WWTP consists of primary, secondary, and tertiary treatment followed by disinfection. Treated effluent is discharged to Five Mile Creek. Two major construction projects are currently underway at the WWTP. The Wastewater Laboratory Expansion and New Administration Building projects will add much needed office and lab space to the facility. Two

other projects are nearly complete: the Fermentation and Odor Control Project, and the Wastewater Fiberoptics Loop.

Many other improvements and expansions have occurred at the wastewater treatment plant over the last five years. The estimated design capacity at the plant today is approximately 10.2 mgd as approved by the Department of Environmental Quality. An update to the wastewater treatment plant facility plan was completed in 2012. The results of the facility plan will be used to develop the capital improvement plan for the WWTP and guide the future studies, improvements, and expansions at the plant for the next several years.

The City of Meridian received a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge permit from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in September of 1999, which expired in 2004. The discharge permit placed limits on flow, biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), total suspended solids, dissolved oxygen, pH, toxicity, and bacteria. Numerous sampling and monitoring requirements for the effluent, Five Mile Creek, and the Boise River are also mandated. The Public Works Department expects to receive a new NPDES discharge permit in the fall/winter of 2014. This will include nutrient limits on phosphorus as low as 0.07 mg/L, which could precipitate significant capital investment into upgrades at the wastewater treatment plant.

Photo: City of Meridian wastewater treatment equipment

The EPA has proposed up to a 98% reduction in the amount of total phosphorus discharged to the Lower Boise River by all point sources. In order to comply with total maximum daily loads (TMDL), Meridian may have to construct expensive phosphorus removal facilities at the WWTP. The additional associated costs will be apportioned to all ratepayers, although the actual construction of these additional improvements will depend on actual growth rates. Currently, NPDES permits are not required for stormwater within the City. However, with increasing population growth, it is expected the City will be responsible for additional compliance measures, requiring additional staff and funding.

All proposed septic systems in the Meridian area are reviewed and approved by Central District Health. Approval is based on characteristics such as distance to groundwater and soil suitability. Distance to groundwater in the Area of City Impact ranges from four to 20 feet and is influenced by seasonal irrigation patterns, with depths lower in summer than in winter. Proposed sewer lines are also subject to approval through the Qualified Licensed Professional Engineer (QLPE) review process or from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Today, there are relatively few active septic systems within the corporate boundaries of the City. A vast

majority of dwellings in Meridian are connected to the City's sewer system.

The demand for new sewer service accounts has continued to increase every year since 2003, as shown in Table 4B.

Class A Recycled Water

The City of Meridian continues to develop its Class A Recycled Water program to produce and distribute recycled water for a variety of uses. Recycled water is a highly treated water resource generated at the City's municipal wastewater treatment plant (reclaimed) that meets standards for Class A reuse, as established by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The City has been producing Class A recycled water since 2009, and beneficially reusing the water for turf irrigation at Heroes Park. This demonstration project offered a highly visible means by which to educate the public about the value of this resource. By the close of 2011, additional infrastructure was installed to extend recycled water service to other use sites, such as irrigating landscaping at the Ten Mile Interchange and the treatment plant site, as well as a commercial gas station and car wash.

TABLE 4B: HISTORICAL SEWER SERVICE ACCOUNTS

Year	Total Accounts	Annual Increase (%)
2003	15,193	N/A
2004	17,299	13.86%
2005	20,292	17.30%
2006	23,245	14.55%
2007	24,287	4.48%
2008	24,857	2.35%
2009	25,364	2.04%
2010	26,054	2.72%
2011	26,620	2.17%
2012	27,361	2.78%
2013	28,357	3.64%

Source: Meridian Utility and Building Services, January 2014.

The City was issued a Final Wastewater Reuse Permit (No. LA-000215-02) on April 19, 2010. This permit is effective for five years and allows for recycled water use in irrigation, dust suppression, toilet flushing, lined surface water features, sanitary sewer flushing, and fire suppression throughout the City. This "City-wide" permit supports the expansion of the program that is presented in the Master Plan. For example, a permit modification was approved in March 2011, to include commercial car washing as an authorized recycled water use. The City's recycled water program has the potential to continue to evolve as the City gains experience with the production and distribution of the resource.

Environmental Division

The Environmental Division of the Public Works Department is composed of Administrative, Industrial Pretreatment, and Surface Water Program areas. The Division applies and promotes sustainable policies, procedures and public education in order to foster environmental quality, economic vitality and social benefit in the program component areas of NPDES Permitting, Floodplain Administration, Industrial Pretreatment, as well as, surface and groundwater quality, air quality, energy conservation, sensitive areas and habitat protection, community recycling, and other appropriate initiatives.

Industrial Pretreatment

The Industrial Pretreatment Program is responsible for execution of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated pretreatment program which monitors and regulates industrial and commercial wastewater discharges in the public sanitary

sewer system. The pretreatment program is an integral part of the wastewater treatment process. Citizens in the community rely on the completeness of the Environmental Division's program to protect them from environmental harm. It is important that the Division have an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved pretreatment program that will stand the scrutiny of citizens and regulators alike. The Pretreatment section of the Environmental Division accomplishes their mission through education, inspection, and enforcement. The section performs over 700 inspections per year.

The City plans to initiate and maintain a pretreatment program that supports a new Public Owned Treatment Works National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES) and a residential grease disposal program over the next five years. Additionally, the City will negotiate NPDES parameters that support a reasonable and enforceable community pretreatment program.

Photo: Ten Mile Creek near the Locust Grove water reservoir

Surface Water Program

The Surface Water Program is responsible for floodplain administration, stormwater program development and compliance, surface water hydrological improvements and surface water quality protection. In October 1999, the Environmental Protection Agency promulgated final Phase II of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Regulations. These regulations affect, among others, small municipal separate storm sewer systems located in urbanized areas. Ada County as a whole is listed as an urbanized area in Appendix 6 of the final rule. Although the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) is responsible for all public street stormwater runoff, the EPA may seek additional agencies to regulate.

The stormwater management program required by NPDES must include the following six components:

1. Public education and outreach on stormwater issues
2. Public involvement and participation
3. Illicit discharge detection and elimination
4. Construction site stormwater runoff control

Photo: Five Mile Creek and pathway

5. Post-construction stormwater management in new development and redevelopment

6. Pollution prevention and good housekeeping for municipal operations

The primary impact to the City is that NPDES permits and corresponding stormwater pollution prevention measures are required during the construction of City capital improvements where ground disturbing activities exceed one acre. As a result, Meridian requires that all City capital improvement projects provide and implement either an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP), or Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

Handling of stormwater drainage poses an ever-present challenge for both the public and private sectors. The ACHD has completed drainage studies for portions of Meridian's Area of City Impact and is studying additional areas. Given the topography and water table, alternatives for the handling of surface drainage are limited. If subsurface solutions are not available, then large areas of land may be consumed for drainage facilities. Those areas could serve jointly as open space and stormwater facilities, if designed to handle the low-volume storms without restricting the area's use for other purposes, including recreation.

The use of natural and constructed drains for stormwater must be explored, and standards established to make the use of such drains a feasible alternative to the consumption of large areas of land. This is an area where cooperation between public agencies and development community is needed. The City applies the following general policies when reviewing new developments and drainage:

1. Drainage solutions shall be formulated to address the requirements of the public (City of Meridian and ACHD), irrigation/drainage districts, and the development community.

2. Solutions may include subsurface or surface facilities, and discharge into drains. "Non-structural" drainage bio-swales along the arterial roadways may minimize "regional" solutions and reduce costs.

Photo: Meridian motorcycle patrol officer having a friendly conversation with a resident

Public Safety

Police Department

With the rapid rate of growth, one would expect an increase in the number of crimes occurring in Meridian. This has not been the case for the City of Meridian. The City takes great pride in the crime rate when compared to the dramatic increase in population. The rate of criminal offenses has remained lower than the national and state averages for several years. Tables 4C and 4D provide a breakdown of crime rates at a local, state, and national level by crime type in 2012.

According to preliminary reports, Meridian crime rates for 2013 will be even lower with a violent crime rate at approximately 121.9 and a property crime rate at approximately 1,289 per 100,000 inhabitants. The rate of violent and property crimes in Meridian is decreasing despite the fact that the City has grown so quickly.

In 2013, the Meridian Police Department received 58,938 calls for service. This is a decrease of 6% from 2012, when calls for service saw a high of 62,603. Review of officer to population ratio and response times suggests that with the addition of officers, detectives, school resource officers, neighborhood contact officers, support staff and the advancements of the administration, the Meridian Police Department is maintaining a respectable crime rate as well as an impressive clearance rate at approximately 49.7% in 2013.

TABLE 4C: VIOLENT CRIME RATES 2012

Region	Per 100,000 persons
Meridian	120.77
State of Idaho	207.9
United States	386.9

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, 2012 Crime in the United States.
Note: includes murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery & aggravated assault.

TABLE 4D: PROPERTY CRIME RATES 2012

Jurisdiction	Per 100,000 persons
Meridian	1577.9
State of Idaho	1938.5
United States	2859.2

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, 2012 Crime in the United States.
Note: includes burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft & arson.

Photo: Meridian police officer handcuffing a suspicious cow

The Criminal Investigations Division of the Meridian Police Department is now comprised of twelve investigators, two evidence technicians, and an administrative secretary. With the addition of detectives in the unit, these officers are able to focus more time on individual cases or complex series. Meridian Police Officers recovered over $170,000 in stolen merchandise, were dispatched to 3,095 traffic collisions, and took reports on 1,596 collisions in 2013. Many of these calls dispatched as traffic collisions, may have ultimately been categorized differently depending on the incident. The Meridian Police Traffic Team has 4 officers, one corporal and one sergeant who specialize in investigating these types of incidents.

In the fall of 2013, a new 13,000 square foot Public Safety Training Center and Police Department remodel was approved to begin construction in May 2014. This facility is an all-purpose Public Safety Training Center with several classrooms, a matt-room, a K-9 training field, and a future site for a scenario village. The training center will be used by all City departments but its primary focus will be on the needs of the Police and Fire departments. In addition to the training center, the Police Department will be going through a remodel that will include 2,100 new square feet of building and a second floor expansion over the lobby. The second floor will also see some major changes to allow for a more efficient use of space and an increase in office space. This is just the first phase of the project; the second phase includes an indoor shooting range.

The Police Department also administers and supports several special programs including:

1. MADC – Meridian Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition is run from the Police Department and works collaboratively with a multitude of sectors of our community for drug education, and prevention by dealing with environmental strategies to reduce the amount of illegal drug use and drug abuse in our community.

2. The Ambassador program is run in coordination with the Parks Department, to have volunteers be the eyes and ears in parks. Volunteers help any person who needs it, and ensure that visitors follow the rules – helping to keep parks safe for all.

3. Police Athletic League, or PAL, which is an activity program for children aged 3 to 14.

4. Business Crime Prevention Program includes training for local businesses on how to handle crimes such as shoplifting and fraud.

5. Bike patrol throughout the City.

6. Neighborhood Watch is a program that the Police Department supports throughout the community. Additionally, the Police Department also began supporting the online neighborhood networking program NextDoor.com in 2014, to better connect with residential areas and to help keep residents connected with each other.

7. Prescription Drug Drop Off is a program where old or unwanted prescription or over-the-counter medications can be disposed of properly. The Police Department has collected over 7000 pounds since October 2009.

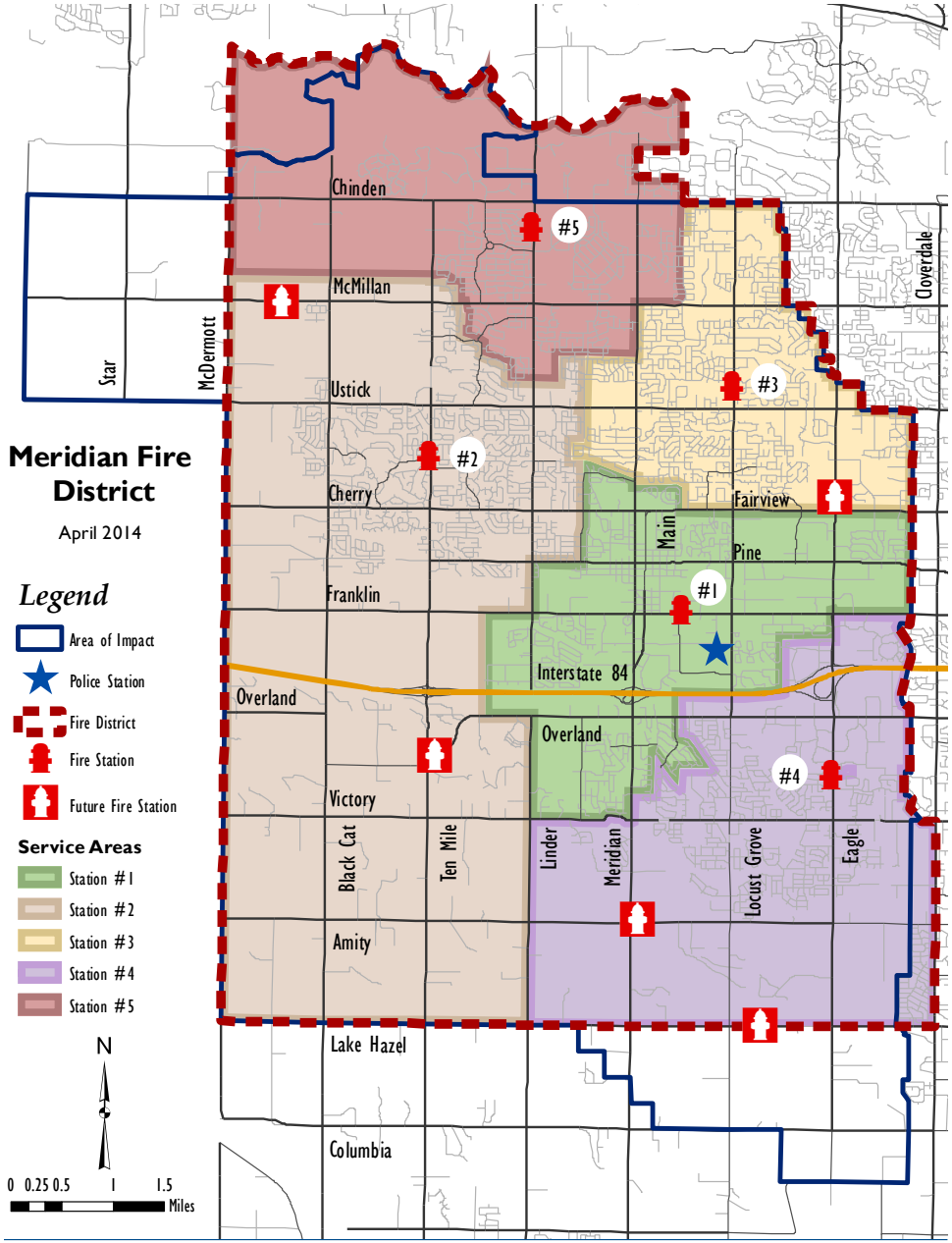
Photo: Fire Department training facility behind the Franklin Road Fire Station

Fire Department

The Meridian Fire Department was formed in 1908 and consisted of only volunteers for many years. The Meridian Rural Fire District was organized in the early 1950s. The two departments decided in the 1970s to combine forces and house their fire equipment in one station located in the center of town. The Meridian Fire Department hired its first full-time employee in 1977 serving as a Fire Marshall for the two districts. The Fire Marshall was the only full-time employee until 1991 when the first paid firefighter was hired. The Meridian Fire Department has quickly transformed from a primarily all-volunteer department into a combination department with 57 full-time firefighters and 20 part-time on-call personnel.

As shown on Figure 4B, Meridian Fire has also grown to five Fire Stations strategically located throughout the Meridian area. In 2005, a Fire Education Safety Center was constructed off of Locust Grove Road and today it is staffed by an Education Specialist. In 2007, a state of the art training tower was built onto Station 1, providing numerous training opportunities for Fire personnel. Today, the Fire Department plans on having a total of 11 fire stations throughout the City at full build-out.

FIGURE 4B: BOUNDARIES AND STATIONS OF THE MERIDIAN FIRE DEPARTMENT



Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, 2014.

> The Meridian Fire Department responds to emergency calls in a 54 square mile jurisdiction, serving a population in excess of 90,000 residents.

The Fire Department is managed by a team of professionals that includes a Fire Chief, Deputy Chief of Prevention, Deputy Chief of Operations, six Division Chiefs, a Fire Inspector, a Training Officer, and specialists for EMS, Communications, Logistics, Quality Assurance, Health and Safety, Public Safety & Education, and three Administrative Support Staff. The Meridian Fire Department responds to emergency calls in a 54 square mile jurisdiction, serving a population in excess of 90,000 residents. In 2013, Meridian firefighters responded to 5,414 calls for service. Services provided by the Meridian Fire Department include: Fire Suppression, Advanced Life Support Emergency Medical Service, Technical Rescue, Hazardous Materials Response, Fire Prevention Education, Fire and Life Safety Inspections, and Plans Review for new developments and construction.

Recreation, Parks and Pathways

Parks and Recreation Department

The City of Meridian Parks and Recreation Department is the primary recreation service provider for Meridian. Programs, activities, and services provided by the Parks Department are organized by seasons of the year; i.e., winter, spring/summer, and fall. These activities include kids, teens, and adults/seniors classes and leagues. The Meridian Community Center, located at 201 E. Idaho Street, is a 4,200-square-foot building, which sits on a parcel of land at 0.33 acres. The Community Center is a valuable resource for recreation classes, summer and winter camps, and other activities

Photo: Playground at Kleiner Park

offered throughout the year. Other organizations also provide recreation services to the people of Meridian and surrounding area. Some organizations serve a particular age group such as Boys & Girls Club, 4-H, Scouts, with others serving all segments of the population (league sports clubs, biking and hiking clubs, etc.).

The City of Meridian completed the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation System Plan (CPRSP) in August 2003. This plan is also referred to as the "Parks Action Plan." As noted in the CPRSP, a majority of private organizations depend on public facilities such as parks, schools, or other publicly owned assets in order to facilitate their recreation activities.

The CPRSP provides a guideline for recreation development, which includes the following:

1. Introduction: Provides an overview of the document organization, a brief analysis of population growth, and an inventory of park land found in the City.

2. Park and Open Space Recommendations: Identifies a concept for parks, trails, and open space; and provides design standards and policies for each park type and makes specific recommendations for each site.

3. Facility Recommendations: Provides policies and recommendations for specialized facilities such as pathways and trails, indoor recreation space, sports facilities, and other specialized areas.

4. Administration and Management Recommendations: Includes recommendations and policies for administrating a park and open space system, establishes policies and recommendations for staffing the program, and looks at potential changes to the Park Impact Fee structure.

5. Project Funding: Provides a list of potential funding sources, identifies project priorities, suggests a financing strategy, and recommends a six-year capital improvement program.

Existing recreation resources in Meridian include 17 fully or partially developed City parks and 4 acres of ball fields at Heritage Middle School, which are owned by the West Ada School District, but maintained and scheduled by the City of Meridian.

Today, total developed park land is 240 acres. In addition, there is one 22-acre park owned and operated by Western Ada Recreation District. Undeveloped parks include the Borup/Bottles properties – 47.2 acres; Bainbridge property – 7.5 acres; South Meridian property – 77.7 acres; a small parcel located at Storey Park – 4.5 acres; and an additional small parcel at Meridian Settlers Park at 5 acres. This undeveloped park acreage totals 141 acres. The existing and proposed parks typically provide sports fields, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and restrooms. Table 4E shows a listing of the existing parks with their associated amenities.

The Meridian Pathways Master Plan (updated January 2010) is a guide for pathway development over the next 20 to 50 years. The Plan proposes an extensive pathway network stemming from the existing canal system within and around the City of Meridian. The Plan includes an inventory of existing pathways and micro-paths, as well as a comprehensive network of future pathways that will connect residents to schools, parks, businesses, neighborhoods, and various recreation and entertainment destinations. The City of Meridian currently maintains nine pathways/segments, including the Fothergill Pathway, the Bear Creek Pathway, the Blackstone Pathway, the Locust Grove Pathway, the H.R. Bud Porter Pathway, the Diane & Winston Moore Pathway, the Five Mile Creek Pathway from Pine to Badley, the Jackson Drain Connection, and the Lochsa Falls/Paramount Pathway.

To estimate future park acreage needs and levels of service standards for Parks, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) developed guidelines on the basis of acres of park land per 1,000 residents within a specified service area. Guidance from NRPA suggests that cities develop their own standards through a set of formulas based on various factors such as population, location, existing recreation in the surrounding area, use, and other factors. The CPRSP has

TABLE 4E: MERIDIAN CITY PARKS BY CATEGORY

Category	Name, Facility, and Size
Regional Parks	Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park: 58.2 acres; amenities include amphitheatre/bandshell, tree arboretum, artwork, basketball, bike racks, bocce ball, community garden, concessions building, drinking fountains, fishing ponds, labyrinth, Meridian Senior Center, mutt-mitt stations, open play, walking paths, picnic shelters, playgrounds, tot lots, restrooms, sand volleyball, splash pad, Veterans Memorial, decorative water features, and off-street parking.
	Meridian Settlers Park: 52.7 acres; amenities include open play, bike racks, drinking fountains, walking path, soccer fields, fishing pond, Idaho's first universally accessible playground, Splash Pad, Sound Garden, Little City of Rocks, Tree of Hope, swings, rock monuments, concessions building, restrooms, picnic shelters, shade structures, tables/benches, tournament-style horseshoe pits, tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, clubhouse, winter disc golf, mutt-mitt stations, and off-street parking. There is an additional 5.009-acre undeveloped parcel.
Community Parks	Bear Creek Park 18.8 acres; amenities include open play, picnic shelter, tables/benches, playground, restrooms, softball fields, volleyball standards, basketball court, walking paths, drinking fountain, winter disc golf, mutt-mitt stations, and off-street parking.
	Heroes Park: 30.1 acres; amenities include open play, basketball, fishing pond, mutt-mitt stations, soccer field, walking path, pond, playgrounds, climbing rocks, picnic shelters, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, concessions/restroom building, reclaimed water plaza, and off-street parking.
	Storey Park: 14.5 acres; amenities include open play, picnic shelters, tables/benches, playground, restrooms, softball field, horseshoe pits, mutt-mitt station, monument, drinking fountains, bike racks, and off-street parking. There is an additional 4.458-acre undeveloped parcel.
	Tully Park: 18.7 acres; amenities include open play, picnic shelters, tables/benches, playground, concessions, restrooms, softball fields, basketball court, memorial tree program, bike racks, skateboard park, drinking fountain, walking path, and off-street parking.
Neighborhood Parks	8th Street Park: 2.8 acres; amenities include open play, restrooms, walking path, playground, bike racks, table/bench, and off-street parking.
	{ Continued next page }

Source: Meridian Parks and Recreation Department, 2014.

TABLE 4E: MERIDIAN CITY PARKS BY CATEGORY

Category	Name, Facility, and Size
Neighbor-hood Parks	Champion Park: 6.0 acres; amenities include open play, picnic shelter, tables/benches, playground, restrooms, basketball court, drinking fountain, walking path, and off-street parking.
	Chateau Park: 6.7 acres; amenities include open play, picnic shelter, tables/benches, playground, restrooms, basketball court, walking paths, drinking fountain, rock monument, and off-street parking.
	Gordon Harris Park: 11.1 acres; amenities include open play, playground, picnic shelter, mutt-mitt station, restrooms, walking paths, pond, drinking fountain, and off-street parking.
	Renaissance Park: 6.5 acres: amenities include open play, restrooms, playground, mutt-mitt station, picnic shelter, tables/benches, basketball court, drinking fountain, walking paths, and off-street parking.
	Seasons Park: 7.1 acres; amenities include open play, picnic shelter, tables/benches, bike rack, mutt-mitt station, playground, restrooms, basketball court, drinking fountain, walking paths, sculpture, and off-street parking.
Mini Parks	Centennial Park: 0.4 acres; amenities include open play, basketball court, bike rack, monument, electronic play, game table, picnic shelter, monument, sculpture, benches, and drinking fountain.
	Cox Monument: 0.1 acres; amenities include small grassy area, picnic shelter, table/bench, decorative water feature, and monuments.
	Fire Station #4 Park: 0.6 acres; amenities include a rock wall and bench, small open play area, and a walking path.
Special Use Parks	City Hall Plaza: 0.9 acres; amenities include amphitheater, pergola, benches, restrooms, water features, bike racks, Heritage Pavilion, commemorative plaque, historical interpretive signs, and off-street parking.
	Generations Plaza: 0.2 acres; amenities include open play, drinking fountain, decorative fountain, historical monument, game table, benches, and bike racks.

Source: Meridian Parks and Recreation Department, 2014.

determined that an average of 4 to 5 acres per thousand of park space is realistic for this area.

The City currently has about 240 acres of developed park space within the Area of City Impact available for public use. This equates to 3 acres of park land per 1,000 population in 2014.

As previously discussed, a park and recreation action plan (CPRSP, 2003) has been adopted. This plan outlines future goals and actions for parks and recreation planning. It also identifies park needs in the community. If the City were to develop the park land that is currently undeveloped (141 acres), it would have a total of 4.6 acres per thousand, based on a current population of approximately 81,380. With COMPASS' projected 2040 population of 154,750, the park level of service would be 2.4 acres per 1,000 population by the year 2040 if all existing undeveloped park land were developed. The Parks and Recreation Department intends to work with the development community and other organizations whenever possible to create partnerships and bring additional parks to fruition.

Western Ada Recreation District

There is a public park in Meridian that is not owned and maintained by the City. At 22 acres, Fuller Park, which is owned and operated by the Western Ada Recreation District, contains amenities, such as baseball fields, a fishing pond, playground areas, picnic shelters, restrooms, an open play area, a walking path, and off-street parking. Residents of Meridian also have access to a pool during the summer located in Storey Park. The pool facility at Storey Park is owned and operated by the Western Ada Recreation District.

Solid Waste[1]

The City of Meridian contracts on its refuse and recycling services. In 2012, the City of Meridian approved the transfer of its solid waste franchise agreement by Sanitary Services Company (SSC) of its right, title and interest in the franchise to Republic Services, and continues to perform under the terms and conditions of the Agreement as of 2014. Republic Services has demonstrated its commitment to providing reliable solid waste collection; innovative, effective recycling and waste reduction programs; quality customer service; valuable public outreach and education efforts; and strong community involvement to Meridian residents and businesses.

Residential Services

In 2013, Republic Services collected a total of 34,370 tons of trash from the residential sector in Meridian. This was an increase of 3.2% or 1,112 tons in trash which can be partially explained by the 2.6% increase in household accounts over the previous 12 months. The average Meridian household disposed of 213 pounds of trash per month in 2013

By the end of 2013 there were 26,997 active household accounts in the City of Meridian. Of those accounts, 80% participated in the recycling program. Meridian residents recycled a total of 4,150 tons during 2013, a 3.3% increase from the previous year. Due to depressed secondary markets, the average price for curbside commingled recyclables was a negative (-$6.33)/ton in 2013. Republic Services covered the annual cost to process those materials as prescribed within the Franchise Agreement.

Republic Services initiated a "grass only" subscription based recycling pilot program in 2013. This cart has year round benefits, including: leaf recycling in November (during Meridian's leaf collection program) and overflow trash from December through March. The grass is taken to a farm in south Ada County where it is recycled, and either used to create cattle feed or soil amendments, depending on quality control testing.

Photo: Republic Services trash collection vehicle

Republic Services also provides a hazardous waste collection service. In 2013, 7,570 vehicles delivered 117 tons of hazardous waste to this site. By comparison, 5,711 vehicles delivered 77 tons in 2012. This was a growth of 33% participation and 52% materials accepted.

[1] Data from the 2013 Republic Services Annual Report

Commercial and Industrial Collection

Republic Services provides collection to each commercial business in Meridian at least once a week. In 2013, commercial trash was taken to the Republic Services transfer station, consolidated with other trash, and taken to the Ada County Landfill. By the end of the year, Republic's commercial trucks had collected 15,974 tons of trash from Meridian businesses, a 7% (1,204 tons) decrease from 2012. This decrease in tonnage may be due to the difference in reporting technologies between SSC and Republic Services.

Republic Services offers commercial commingled recycling in Meridian. Numerous businesses and every school in Meridian recycle. Starting in 2014, Republic Services began tracking how many of the 1,049 Meridian businesses are utilizing the commercial recycling program. Commercial recycling dipped in 2013, with businesses recycling a total of 1,277 tons, 101 tons less than 2012. This decrease in tonnage may be due to differences in reporting methodologies used by SSC and Republic Services.

Roll off services are provided on request to both permanent and temporary accounts. Industrial service includes compactors or roll off boxes (6, 8, 10, 20, 30, or 40 cubic yards). The mini boxes (6, 8, and 10 cubic yards) are taken to the Republic Services transfer station for consolidation. The larger boxes are direct hauled to the Ada County Landfill. Industrial trash continued to increase throughout the year with an annual total of 21,856 tons. This was an increase of 20% (4,335 tons) as compared to 2012.

Republic Services also offers an industrial recycling service. In 2013, 3,801 tons of industrial material was recycled as compared to 4,024 tons the previous year by Meridian's industrial sector. The industrial sector is comprised of temporary services, such as construction site removal work, and is more variable.

Transfer Station Collection

Located at 2130 W. Franklin Road, Republic Services' transfer station accepts waste from commercial trucks, residential trucks, roll off trucks, mini roll off trucks, public vehicles, and local businesses. The waste collected at the transfer station is consolidated and taken to the Ada County Landfill for disposal. In 2013, the transfer station collected 91,782 tons of material, a 22.3% increase over 2012 tonnage collected.

TABLE 4F: Meridian Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Pounds Collected	113,790	142,653	154,000	234,000
# of Households	4,917	5,607	5,711	7,570

Source: PSC Environmental Services Company, April 2014.

Education

West Ada School District[2]

Public school facilities in the City of Meridian are operated by West Ada School District (formerly Joint School District No.2). Enrollment data about the school district are for the entire district, an area larger than the City of Meridian and its Area of City Impact. West Ada School District covers 384 square miles and serves the cities of Meridian, Star and Eagle, western and southwestern portions of Boise, part of Garden City and the unincorporated areas of Ada County that lie between these municipalities. In total, there are 32 elementary schools, 9 middle schools (2 of which are alternative middle schools), 6 comprehensive high schools,

[2] Text provided by West Ada School District

TABLE 4G: HISTORICAL FALL ENROLLMENT, WEST ADA SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Year	Total	Pre-K & Hdcpd	Kinder-garten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
2012-2013*	37,312	237	2,732	2,826	2,892	2,951	2,888	2,894	2,932	2,939	2,815	2,934	2,786	2,534	2,438
2011-2012	36,538	235	2,713	2,806	2,872	2,930	2,868	2,874	2,911	2,918	2,795	2,913	2,766	2,516	2,421
2010-2011	35,933	307	2,722	2,852	2,882	2,843	2,826	2,896	2,867	2,764	2,629	3,056	2,528	2,432	2,329
2009-2010	35,322	245	2,757	2,849	2,839	2,803	2,874	2,808	2,698	2,571	2,830	2,830	2,509	2,399	2,310
2008-2009	34,441	205	2,731	2,829	2,770	2,799	2,762	2,681	2,492	2,801	2,568	2,677	2,476	2,414	2,236
2007-2008	33,432	226	2,629	2,735	2,697	2,759	2,628	2,478	2,702	2,543	2,483	2,583	2,491	2,289	2,189
2006-2007	32,277	212	2,555	2,609	2,679	2,542	2,387	2,652	2,472	2,395	2,412	2,664	2,400	2,287	2,011
2005-2006	30,582	204	2,446	2,537	2,400	2,259	2,517	2,365	2,306	2,335	2,460	2,414	2,332	2,071	1,936
2004-2005	28,655	232	2,313	2,259	2,132	2,361	2,237	2,162	2,214	2,313	2,204	2,322	2,146	1,965	1,795
2003-2004	26,987	208	2,023	1,987	2,234	2,103	2,012	2,121	2,156	2,139	2,166	2,197	2,104	1,796	1,741
2002-2003	26,114	185	1,881	2,155	2,070	1,958	2,074	2,114	2,082	2,122	2,015	2,189	1,925	1,687	1,657
2001-2002	25,233	158	2,011	2,007	1,886	1,977	2,042	2,005	2,082	1,922	1,988	2,024	1,822	1,702	1,607
2000-2001	23,946	133	1,839	1,846	1,891	1,943	1,920	2,007	1,832	1,911	1,811	1,954	1,791	1,612	1,456
1999-2000	22,820	143	1,619	1,847	1,851	1,830	1,891	1,767	1,834	1,740	1,732	1,861	1,714	1,561	1,430

Note: 2012-2013* values by grade are estimates calculated from known enrollment total and % of total for each grade from previous year.
Source: Idaho Department of Education, Fall Enrollment Statistics, Historical Fall Enrollment, 2013.

3 alternative high schools, 2 charter high schools, and 1 magnet high school throughout the district. The mission statement West Ada School District is "Preparing Today's Children for Tomorrow's Challenges."

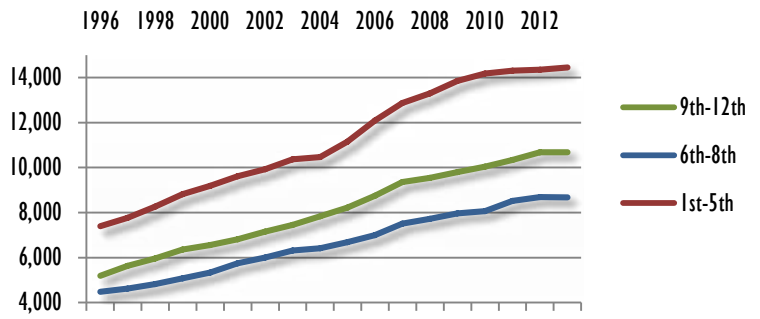
Enrollment

Not including the Pre-Kindergartners, there were 17,236 elementary-age children enrolled in West Ada School District at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year. There were 8,482 middle school children enrolled in the school district at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year. High school, grades 9 through 12, enrollment at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year was 10,437. Table 4G shows historical student enrollment in West Ada School District, which has almost doubled over the last 15 years.

Enrollment growth has placed tremendous demands on schools. Since 2000, the district has opened 9 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 2 alternative middle schools, 3 high schools, and 3 alternative high schools. In the past ten years, West Ada School District has opened schools at a faster pace than any district in the history of the state of Idaho. With an additional 500 students per year projected to move into the district, this rate of new school construction is expected to continue into the foreseeable future. Land acquisition for future school sites within West Ada School District are based upon the following acreage standards:

- Elementary Schools 10-12 acres
- Middle Schools 40 acres
- High Schools 55 acres

Historical Fall Enrollment, West Ada School District



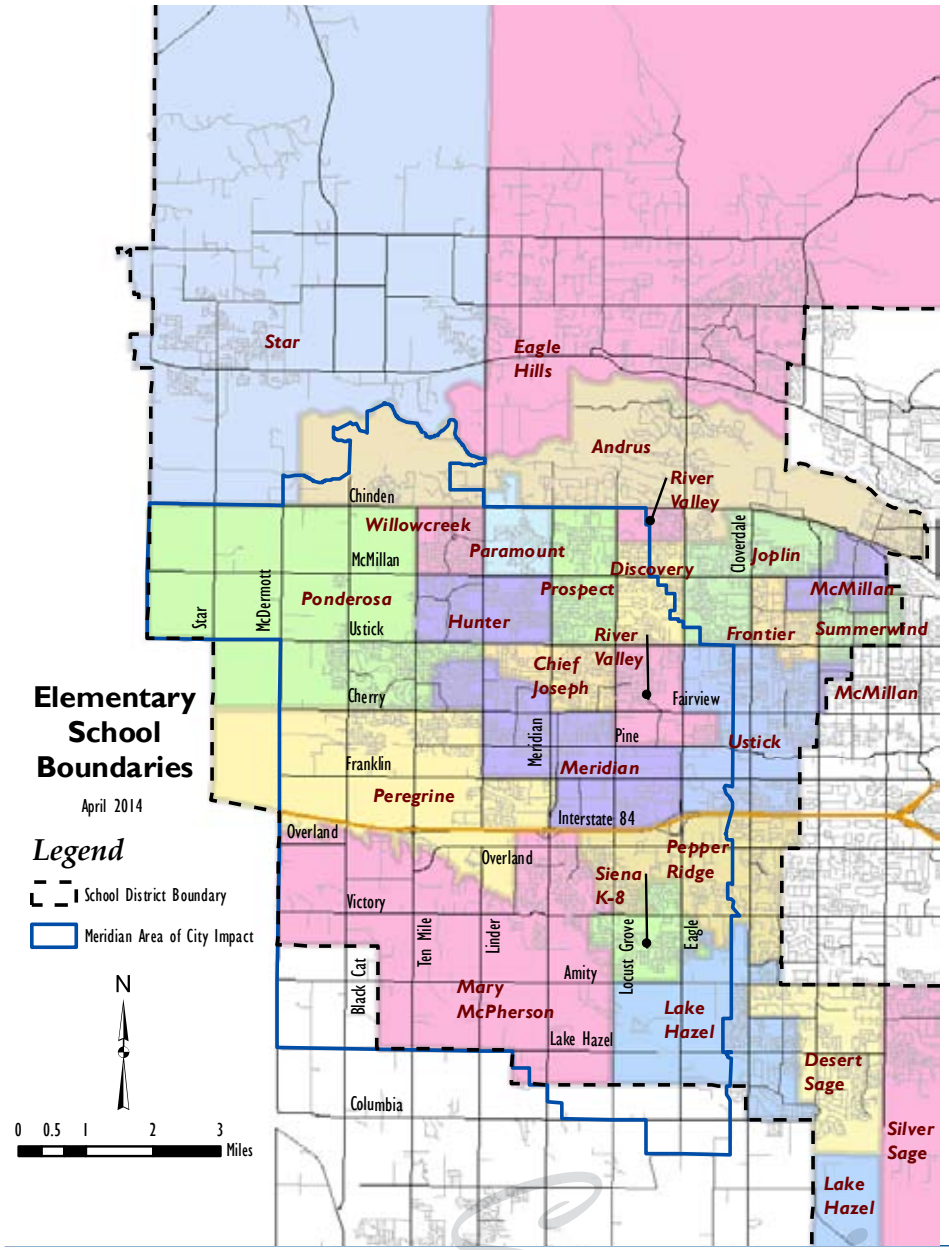
Note: See Table 4G for data.

Based on past trends, the District estimates that approximately 1,000 acres of land will be needed within Meridian's Area of City Impact to meet the needs of all existing and projected K-12 students. As shown on the Future Land Use Map, about one elementary school is projected within each square mile of the City. Depending upon the residential density of an area and other build-out factors, the District estimates that it will need at least one middle school for every two to two and a half square miles and one high school for every three square miles of fully developed land.

Bus Transportation

School bus transportation in West Ada School District is a cooperative effort involving transportation staff, schools, parents, students, and the community. The district transports an average of 13,400 students per day to 50 different schools on 270 buses. Each year West Ada School District buses cover an average of over 3 million miles and use approximately 400,000 gallons of fuel. The District bus facility is located on Franklin Road, between Linder and Ten Mile Roads in Meridian. The mission of the transportation department of the district is to provide safe, efficient, and enjoyable access

FIGURE 4C: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOUNDARIES



Source: From the West Ada School District website, 2013.

to learning in a manner that contributes in a positive way to the overall academic success of the students of this district.

To reduce the need for safety busing, the district works with ACHD and City staff to develop safe routes to school. Through this collaborative effort, projects are identified with school boundaries, walk zones and safety busing in mind.

Elementary Schools

Elementary schools include kindergarten through grade five. Most of the elementary schools in the district have a traditional school year calendar, but there are four elementary schools in the district that have a modified calendar. The district operates 32 elementary schools, each strategically located through the 384 square mile district. These schools range in size from 320 to 750 students. The buildings vary in age, with the oldest being 56 years old and the newest having opened in 2013. The district's older facilities are all well maintained and have been periodically remodeled over the years to improve efficiency, safety and comfort.

Middle Schools

Middle schools include 6th through 8th graders. Like most of the elementary schools, the middle schools have a traditional school year calendar. The district's middle schools serve as a bridge for pre-adolescents as they move from elementary to high school. A team approach is used in core classes at grade six to ease the transition from the elementary classroom. Academic emphasis is placed on refinement of basic skills through instruction in traditional subjects such as language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. The curriculum in middle school is expanded to include more opportunities to pursue the fine arts and other elective choices. The middle schools are committed to providing students with an educational experience that prepares them academically, physically, and socially for successful high school years.

To reduce the need for safety busing, the district works with ACHD and City staff to develop safe routes to school. Through this collaborative effort, projects are identified with school boundaries, walk zones and safety busing in mind

High Schools

Academic excellence is the focus at the district's high schools. In 2012, 90.7% percent of West Ada School District high school seniors graduated in 2012. All of the district's high schools offer a full academic program with courses in basic skills and college-preparatory skills. Intensive instruction in the liberal arts and technical areas prepare high school students for the best colleges and universities as well as for today's work force. Central Academy, Meridian Academy and Eagle Academy, the district's alternative high schools, provide opportunities for at-risk students. Meridian, Centennial, Eagle, Mountain View and Rocky Mountain High Schools are all 5-A classification for athletic competition and other competitive programs such as music, drama, and debate. They have a rich tradition of winning regional and state championships and are often recognized for outstanding achievement in music and the arts. Students develop leadership skills through a variety of clubs and extracurricular activities.

Charter and Magnet Programs

In addition to traditional scholastic opportunities, West Ada School District offers a variety of Charter and Magnet schools to accommodate, encourage, and challenge all students. Magnet schools are available at all levels and include:

The Arts: Christine Donnell School of the Arts, Pioneer School of the Arts, Chief Joseph School of the Arts and Eagle School of the Arts.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education: Galileo K-8, Summerwind STEM Academy (K-5), Spalding STEM Academy (modified calendar) (K-5), Barbara Morgan STEM Academy (K-5), Lewis and Clark Middle School (6-8), Heritage Middle School (6-8), and STEM programs have been expanded at all high schools.

Other Magnets: Paramount Elementary Literacy Magnet, Gateway School of Languages and Culture, and Renaissance Magnet High School. A fully recognized International Baccalaureate (IB) high school. Students complete their Associates degrees while completing their high school diplomas. Strong partnerships with Idaho State University and the College of Western Idaho formed the foundation of this program.

Additionally, West Ada School District offers several Academy High Schools which provide more one-on-one interaction between students and educators.

Private Education Opportunities

In addition to the public school system, Meridian has several private schools opportunities. These facilities cater to all children of all ages, from pre-school through high school. Some of the larger private schools in Meridian are: Cole Valley Christian, Challenger School, A Child's Choice Montessori School, and The Ambrose School. There are several other, smaller private schools in Meridian as well.

> In addition to traditional scholastic opportunities, West Ada School District offers a variety of Charter and Magnet schools to accommodate, encourage, and challenge all students.

Continuing Education

The City has a solid partnership with the education institutions in Meridian, primarily West Ada School District, and Idaho State University (ISU) who opened the doors to ISU-Meridian in the fall of 2009. Students at ISU specialize in Law and Leadership, Research and Medical Arts, and International Studies. The City has been working with ISU to not only strengthen educational programs but to create partnerships with the private sector. The ISU President's Southwestern Idaho Advisory Council on Health Science Education and Economic Excellence focuses on specific business and research opportunities. This Council of business and educational leaders helps prepare ISU to expand health science education opportunities and support the efforts of The CORE.

Other colleges and universities in the Meridian area include (main campus location in parenthesis): Boise State University (Boise), University of Idaho Extension (Boise), University of Phoenix (Meridian), College of Western Idaho (Nampa), College of Idaho (Caldwell), Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa), Stevens-Henager College (Boise), Guardian College

(Meridian), Broadview University (Meridian), University of Phoenix (Meridian), Carrington College (Boise), Brown Mackie College (Boise), and Treasure Valley Community College (Ontario, OR).

Libraries[3]

Separate from the City, is the Meridian Library District. The mission of the Meridian Library District is to provide a safe and inviting place where residents can interact with each other; find information about their community and its offerings; investigate a wide range of topics pertaining to their work, school and personal lives; and develop a love of reading and learning that will continue throughout their lives. The Library District currently has two libraries, one in the Silverstone Business Campus and the main library branch on Cherry Lane. In an ongoing commitment to offer services to the entire community, Meridian Library operates its bookmobile Wednesday through Saturday at locations throughout the District.

Public Utilities

Electricity[4]

Idaho Power Company is an electric utility engaged in the generation, transmission, distribution, sale and purchase of electric energy. Idaho Power provides electrical services throughout the City of Meridian and the Area of City Impact. Idaho Power is a public service company regulated by the Idaho Public Utility Commission, the Oregon Public Utility Commission and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Power is predominantly supplied by 17 hydroelectric generation facilities on the Snake River system. Power is also supplied

The Library District currently has two libraries, one in the Silverstone Business Campus and the main library branch on Cherry Lane.

through a shared ownership of three coal-fired generation plants located in Wyoming, Montana and Oregon. Additional generation is provided through Idaho Power's ownership of three natural gas-fired generation plants. Idaho Power's headquarters are in Boise, Idaho. They have an employee base of approximately 2,300 people.

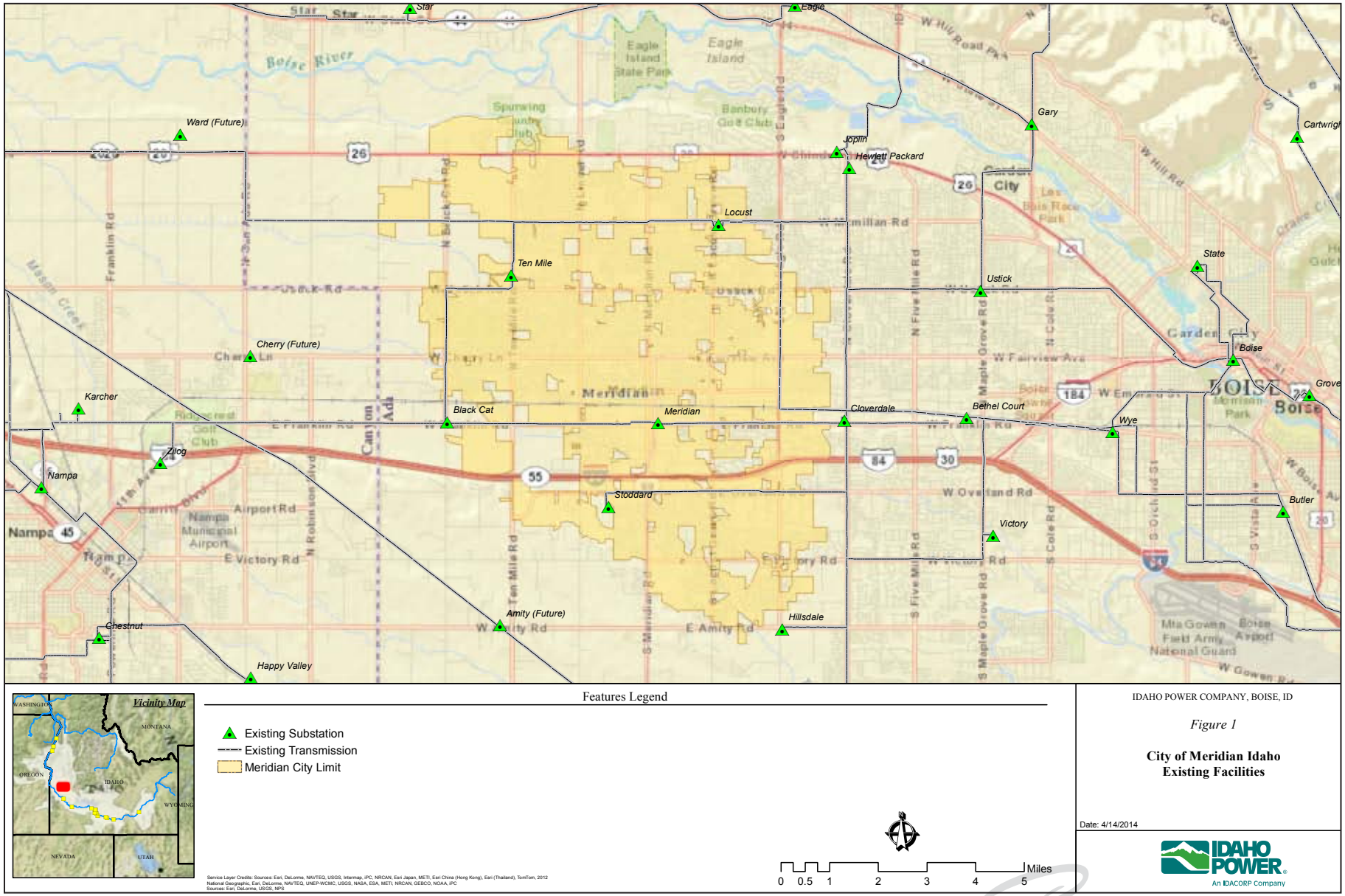
Today, Idaho Power serves a 24,000 square-mile service area and roughly 1,000,000 people in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon. As of January 2014, Idaho Power serviced approximately 35,000 residential and general business customers within the City of Meridian limits. With 17 low-cost hydroelectric power plants as the core of its generation portfolio, Idaho Power's 501,000 residential, business and agricultural customers pay some of the nation's lowest prices for electricity.

Idaho Power facilities currently located in the Meridian area include two transmission lines and five substations, one located at the intersection of Locust Grove and McMillan Roads; the second located at Black Cat Road and Franklin Road; the third located near the intersection of Franklin Road and E. 2nd Street; the fourth near the intersection of Ten Mile and Ustick Roads; and the fifth near the intersection of Stoddard and Overland Roads. Figure 4D depicts the general location of electric utility facilities of a voltage of 69,000 volts or greater. Typically, public streets and road rights-of-way

[3] http://www.mld.org/

[4] Text provided by Blake Watson, Idaho Power Company

FIGURE 4D: EXISTING IDAHO POWER LINES/STATIONS NEAR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN



Source: Blake Watson, Idaho Power Company, April 2014.

serve as corridors for electric facilities. Transmission lines are usually located on road rights-of-way or private easements that Idaho Power Company acquires from property owners. Additional transmission lines and substations will be necessary in the future in order to service Meridian's growing needs. Designation of the locations of future electric utility facilities shown in Figure 4D applies to a general utility corridor area rather than to a specific site.

Idaho Power takes a proactive stance in the planning process and is committed to strengthening communication with Meridian so that both the City's and Idaho Power's goals can be mutually recognized and implemented. In December 2012, Idaho Power completed the Eastern Treasure Valley Electric Plan. The plan involved a Citizen Advisory Committee to assist Idaho Power in the placement of potential future locations for transmission lines and substations. Idaho Power employs a three-part strategy: responsible planning, responsible development and protection of resources, and responsible energy use, which ensures they approach the current and future demands thoughtfully. Wise use of energy helps ensure fair priced and reliably electricity today and tomorrow.

Communications

Centurylink provides basic telephone service and CableOne provides cable T.V. service, within the City of Meridian and its Area of City Impact. Both companies provide internet services. Several telecommunications companies offer wireless and cellular phone service and other providers offer internet and T.V. service through other wireless means. Portions of the City have been equipped with fiber-optics.

Gas

Intermountain Gas Company is the sole provider of natural gas in southern Idaho, including Meridian. There are dual, high-pressure, natural gas pipelines that bisect the southwest part of the Area of City Impact. These pipelines and the associated easement are discussed further in the Hazardous Areas section of this report.

Irrigation

Irrigation water in Meridian is supplied by a series of irrigation canals and laterals diverted from the Boise River. Three main canals serve the City and its Area of City Impact: New York Canal, Ridenbaugh Canal, and Settlers' Canal. Maintenance and operation of the New York Canal and its laterals is performed by the Boise Project Board of Control, under contract with the Bureau of Reclamation. Both the Board of Control and the Bureau of Reclamation review rights-of-way, easements, road crossings, relocation of facilities, utility crossings, and other related matters for the New York Canal. Water rights associated with the New York Canal are administered by the Nampa and Meridian Irrigation District (NMID). The NMID is also responsible for maintenance and operation of the Ridenbaugh Canal and its laterals and administration of associated water rights. Settlers' Canal is operated and maintained by Settlers' Irrigation District, while its laterals are maintained by the water users. Settlers' Irrigation District is responsible for administration of water rights associated with Settlers' Canal.

5 What are the Physical and Cultural Features of Meridian?

As required by Idaho State Statute, this section of the report includes a discussion of Natural Resources, Hazardous Areas, National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors, Agriculture, and Special Sites and Historic Resources. These physical, cultural, historical and natural resources (and obstacles) form the basis of the community and affect growth and development.

Analysis of the City's natural resources includes climate, air quality, geology, hydrology, soils, and vegetation. Special sites, including community landmarks and natural features that are important to the community are then identified in this section. Agriculture has both natural/physical and social/cultural impacts on the community and is addressed next, followed by Historic resources representing Meridian's heritage. Hazardous areas, those that could pose a threat or danger to the community if not properly administered, are addressed right before concluding this section. The last couple of paragraphs concern National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors.

Photo: Overlooking a lake at Kleiner Park

Natural, Special, Historic, & Agricultural Resources

Community Concerns

When the 2002 version of the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan was composed, citizen groups were formed to discuss issues and concerns regarding natural resources and community character. The following is a brief synopsis of some of those concerns, which have also been reinforced in recent years, and are included as goals within the current City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan.

Meridian residents tend to value their natural resources and are interested in preserving and protecting them while recognizing a need for growth and development. Water quality/pollution, canal tiling and piping of ditches, noise pollution, air quality, floodplains, connectivity, density, neighborhood services, natural habitat, agricultural preservation, and open space preservation were the top concerns expressed.

As growth continues, increased pressures are placed on natural resources. Productive agricultural soils, vegetation, and waterways are all valuable resources that the residents of Meridian enjoy and want to preserve. While development is expected within the Area of City Impact, a maze of monotonous development is not desired, either. City leaders and citizens focus on trying to balance open spaces and Meridian's agricultural heritage with development and growth. Development in Meridian which expresses concerns and appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of the physical environment should be encouraged. Meridian has seen much of its natural resources change over the years from agricultural open spaces to a growing city. Growth projected for Meridian emphasizes the need for attention to Meridian's character, specifically its natural and historic resources. Providing and protecting unique sites and resources will assure continuance of the quality of life that the residents have come to know and expect.

Photo: Hoar frost at Meridian City Hall

Natural Resources

Climate

The City of Meridian and surrounding area is favored by a mild, arid climate. While summer hot periods rarely last longer than a few days, temperatures of 100° F or higher occur nearly every year. July is the average warmest month, with the average high temperature of 92° F. January is the average coolest month with an average low temperature of 22° F. The normal precipitation pattern in the Meridian area shows a December winter average of 1.47 inches of precipitation and a very pronounced summer low of about 0.23 inches in August.[1] Meridian has a United States Department of Agriculture Hardiness Zone designation of 7a, with some areas of 6b. Meridian's elevation is approximately 2,600 feet above sea level.

Air Quality[2]

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) regularly monitors air pollutant levels in Ada County. During the 1970s and early 1980s the County experienced violations of the national standards for carbon monoxide (CO) and Particulate Matter (PM10). As a result, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the area as nonattainment for these two pollutants. Ada County, however, has not

[1] The Weather Channel, http://www.weather.com

[2] Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

experienced any violations of the national standards for CO since 1986. In 1999, EPA removed Ada County's designation of nonattainment for PM10. In 2001, IDEQ submitted a Maintenance Plan for CO that can help the progress of the area into attainment, and in 2002 a maintenance plan for PM10.

As a result of efforts to restrict CO and PM10 pollutant sources, Northern Ada County is currently classified as a Limited Maintenance Area for CO and PM10. Automobile and area source emissions are the two major sources of CO. The main sources of PM10 are fugitive road dust and agriculture.

Photo: Farm ground in south Meridian

Geology[3]

The Meridian area lies within the Snake River and Boise River Plains. Geology consists of a series of volcanic lava flows inter-bedded with soil layers. Most outcrops within a few miles of Meridian expose black basalt lava flows on the Snake River Plain. Significant geologic areas include the Snake River and its tributary, the Boise River, plus the Idaho Batholith.

Generally, geology-related issues in the region involve the basalts of the Snake River Plain or the windblown silt and sand that covers the basalt. The windblown material on the plain in the Meridian area supports some of the best farmland in southwest Idaho, but its properties can create problems for construction. Large structures placed directly on this material rather than on engineered foundations may settle because of compaction or the spreading of the unconsolidated material.

Hydrology

The hydrology of the area is affected by agricultural and development practices in the local area. Surface water within the Area of City Impact includes the Boise River; seven perennial creeks; intermittent creeks; plus an extensive network of canals, laterals and drains. Groundwater in the Meridian area appears to be of good quality and close to the surface. Groundwater is the primary source of potable water for the City. Twenty deep wells are located throughout the area which provides drinking water to residents. Use of septic tanks in areas of poor soils and/or a high water table pose a threat in terms of groundwater. Because of the community's agricultural base and location in a relatively low rainfall area, groundwater resources are extremely important. All surface and subsurface drainage returns to the Boise River.

[3] 2002 City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan

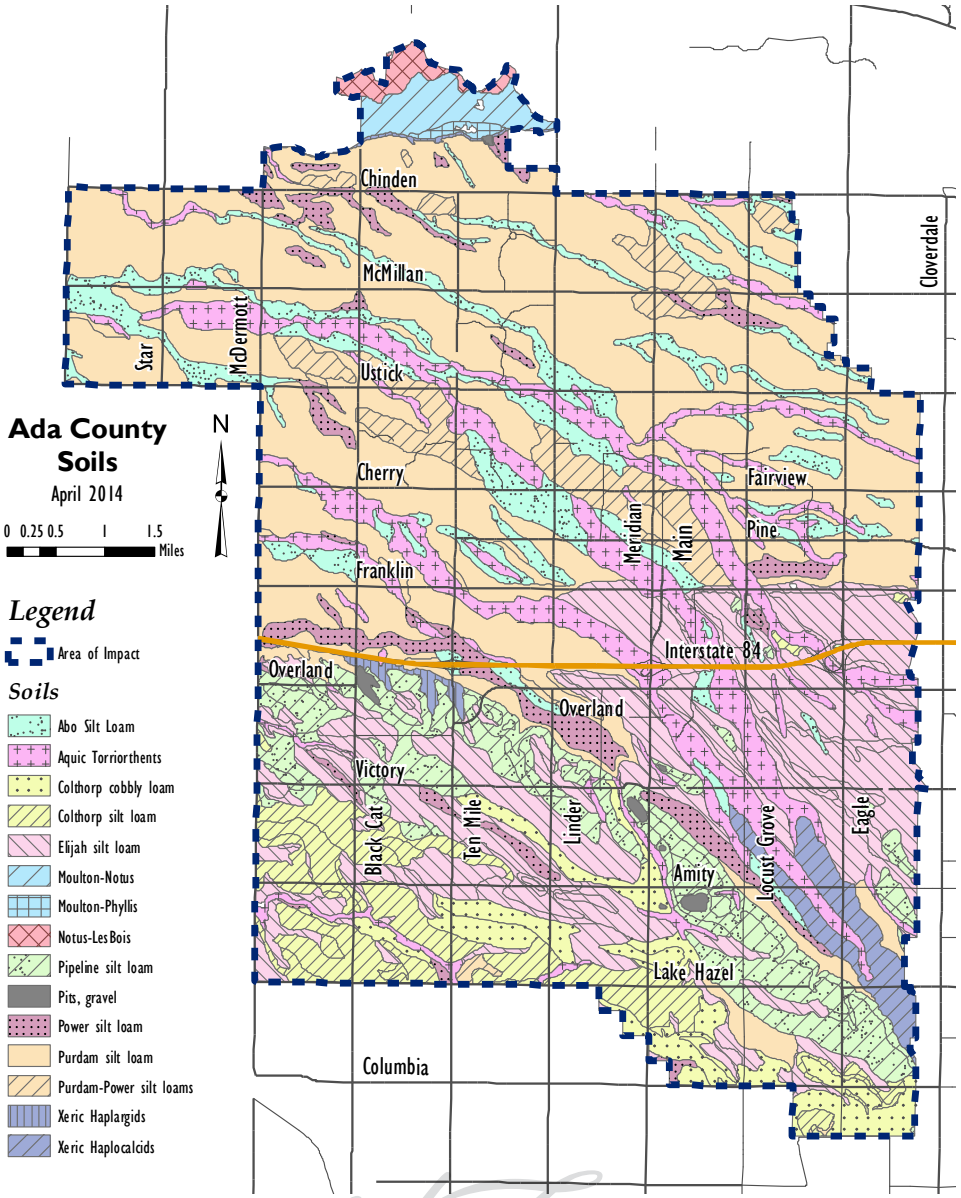
Soils

An understanding of soil properties makes it possible to predict suitability or limitations for present and future uses. In some cases, limited soil absorption for a domestic septic tank, combined with a high seasonable water table, limits the capacity of the soil to absorb and filter additional liquid being discharged by a drainfield. The probable result is usually contamination of groundwater supplies. Soils that are shallow or water-saturated do not have adequate volume to absorb and filter sewage effluent. Figure 5A shows common soil types in the Meridian area.

Vegetation

Trees provide shade and wildlife habitat, reduce heat island effects, reduce soil erosion, and improve air quality. Throughout the Meridian area are natural tree and shrub corridors along the creeks and drains. Not only do these vegetation resources provide aesthetic values and recreation opportunities, they are also critical for wildlife, allowing for the migration of species between developed areas. Without these riparian zone corridors and the ability to move through them, many species would not have habitat areas large enough to support them. Protection and preservation of natural vegetation along all creeks and drains within the Meridian area assures that residents are able to continue viewing wildlife and natural scenery, while preserving a valuable natural resource. There are no forests in Meridian, but outside of the riparian zones previously mentioned, portions of the City are heavily planted with trees and shrubs. Parks and subdivisions contribute to the recreational and aesthetic values of the City, and enhance the appearance of urban areas as they are typically densely landscaped.

FIGURE 5A: SOILS IN THE MERIDIAN AREA



Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, 2014.
Soil data from the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/, 2013.

Physical Features

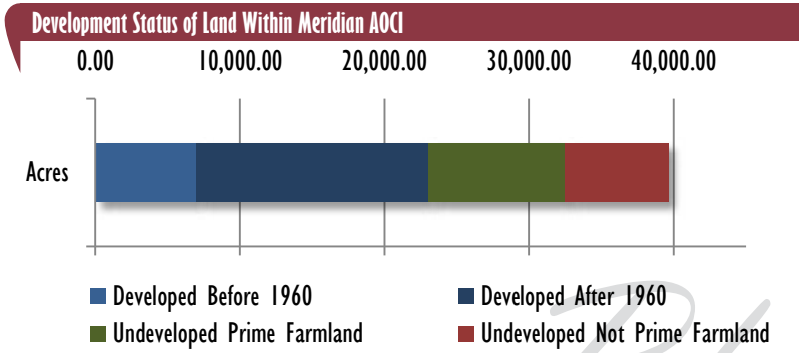
TABLE 5A: AGRICULTURAL LAND

Land Within Meridian Area of City Impact (AOCI)	Acres
Total Area	39,627.01
Total Developed	22,971.36
Developed in Last 50 Years	15,979.30
Development on Prime Farmland (If irrigated)	17,359.67
Total Remaining Undeveloped Land	16,655.66
Undeveloped Prime Farmland	7,542.94
Undeveloped Prime Farmland (If Irrigated)	9,527.98
Undeveloped Not Prime Farmland	7,127.68

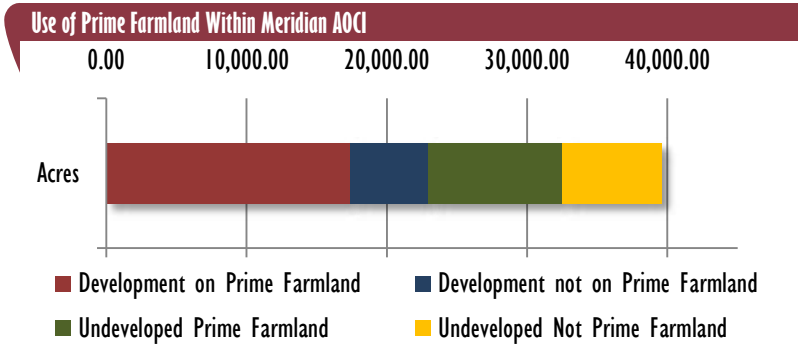
Source: Prime farmland (soil) data provided by COMPASS, January 2012.
Note: Development status determined by existing City limits, Roadway ROW, County subdivisions, and pending development applications as of May, 2014. Ag exempt properties (determined by State tax codes, 2013) were subtracted from City limits and County subdivisions.

Agriculture

Much farmland in the Meridian area has, or is being converted into, urban development. However, there are still some prime agricultural lands in production within Meridian's Area of City Impact. For the purposes of this report, prime farmland is defined as land that has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food



Note: See Table 5A for data. Prime farmland assumes irrigated soils.



Note: See Table 5A for data. Prime farmland assumes irrigated soils.

and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fossil fuels, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor and with minimal soil erosion, while also having access to irrigation water. Figure 5B shows the irrigated agricultural land, meadows, and dry grazing land in Meridian.

While rapid growth has converted 15,979 acres of agricultural lands into roads, houses, and shopping centers over the past 50 years, there is still 9,528 acres of undeveloped land with soils considered to be prime farmland (if irrigated) within Meridian's Area of City Impact (AOCI). Within this area, 7,543 acres of this prime farmland are in active use (irrigated), and there is an additional 7,128 acres of open space that is not prime farmland, but could be used for other agricultural uses. With a rich history built on agriculture, Meridian would like to preserve some of its rural character, protect opportunities for local produce, maintain and expand diversity in employment opportunities, and preserve a variety of housing and lifestyle choices, such as living on working agricultural land or open space.

South Meridian

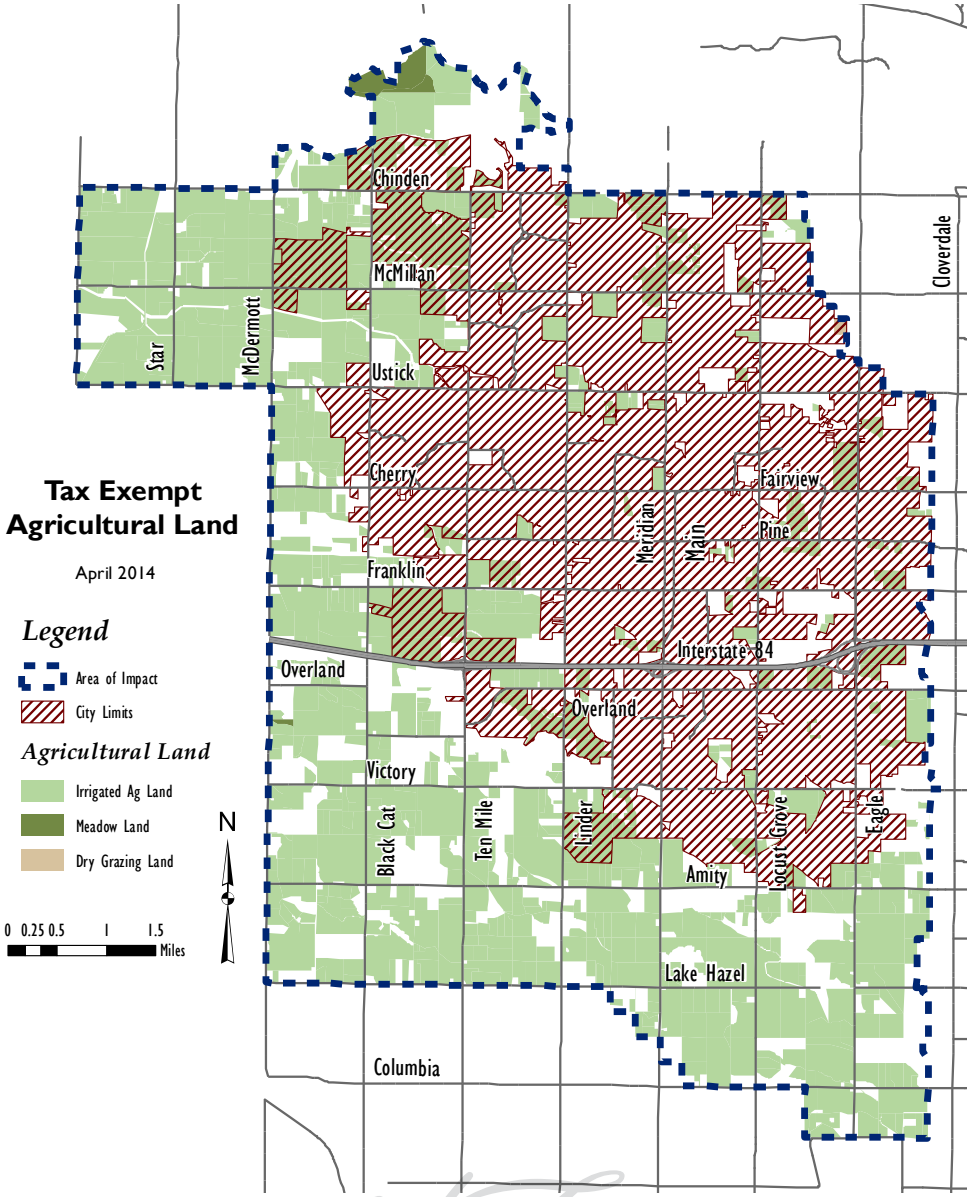
In 2008, Meridian in cooperation with Ada County began the process of evaluating current and future land uses in South Meridian. This study area, loosely defined between I-84, Kuna, Boise, and the Ada-Canyon County line, was eventually adopted into the Meridian Area of City Impact. While the process clearly identified which city that County residents and stakeholders most identified with, either Meridian or Kuna, no land uses were selected and the entire area was instead designated as a Future Planning and Referral Area, to be determined later. In 2012, through a second round of public outreach and planning efforts, the City worked with stakeholders to identify future land uses for this area. An "ultra-low" density future land use designation was developed as part of this process.

This new land use, Rural/estate Residential, is intended to protect rural lifestyles, while allowing for small ranchettes and rural neighborhoods, such as clustered developments. Clustered developments consist of a small neighborhood of homes developed in relatively close proximity, to reduce utility costs, and are surrounded by open space or integrated with community farming areas. These types of developments can help transition to nearby urban projects and also protect larger agricultural uses into the future.

Fields District

At the time of this report, the Fields District, a study area in the northwest corner of Meridian, is being evaluated for agricultural and bioscience related opportunities through private, public-private, and public-public initiatives. This study is evaluating available land, local and state policies, market demand, partnership, capital needs, and human resources for a variety of unique economic development

FIGURE 5B: AGRICULTURAL TAX EXEMPT LAND IN MERIDIAN



Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, 2014.

Physical Features

TABLE 5B: NATIONAL REGISTER-LISTED HISTORIC RESOURCES, MERIDIAN

Register Number	Resource Name	Address
5001599	Bell, R.H. and Jessie, House	137 E. Pine St.
5001600	Hill, Clara, House	1123 N. Main St.
82000210	Hunt, E. F., House	49 E. State St.
82000223	Meridian Exchange Bank	109 E. 2nd St.
3000122	Mittleider Farmstead Historic District	575 Rumpel Ln.
8000905	Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co.	815 N. Main St.
82000227	Neal, Halbert F. and Grace, House	101 W. Pine St.
96001506	Tolleth House	134 E. State Ave.

Source: National Register of Historic Places Program, http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/, 2013.

and marketing initiatives not only in northwest Meridian, but the in Treasure Valley as a whole. Some of the outcomes from this process may involve identifying and preserving for agricultural related land uses, tourism, education, economic development, clustered subdivisions, and/or food security.

Special Sites and Historic Resources

Historic Resources

Meridian has a unique, storied history. Preservation of that history is important because of the richness and meaning that it adds to the lives of its residents and the link it provides between the past and future. As development has increased, however, rural historic resources throughout the region have disappeared.

Historic preservation in Idaho began in 1881 with the creation of the Historic Society of Idaho Pioneers. In 1907, the Idaho State Historical Society, a state agency serving several preservation functions, was formed. Preservation efforts in Idaho began in earnest in 1966 with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. Meridian's Historic Preservation dates back to the late 1980s.

As shown in Table 5B, there are several Meridian properties currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to these properties, more than 140 historic architectural resources have been recorded within the City, and more than 30 outside the City, but within the Area of City Impact. The recorded buildings probably represent just a sample of the actual number of historic buildings within the entire study area.

Historic commercial buildings recorded within the City reflect its important agricultural heritage. They include grain elevators, a feed mill, a wagon shop, a cheese factory, and a number of shops. Historic public buildings include a public library, Meridian Rural High School, and a municipal pumping station, all constructed prior to 1923. The history of town settlement is also reflected in the many private historic residences that have been recorded.

Outside the City Core, but within the Area of City Impact, architectural resources include historic farmsteads, residences, hay derricks, irrigation facilities, and schools. Some of these, such as the White Cross School/Hamming Farmstead, are no longer present due to road widening and residential development. A study of historical irrigation in Ada County recorded a number of agricultural features within Meridian's Area of City Impact. These include the Ridenbaugh Canal Check Dam and associated structures, the Ten Mile Check/Weir structures, the Sundell Lateral Lava Rock Check, and various Settler's (Lemp) Canal features.

No Geological sites or monuments have been identified in Meridian, nor are there any Native American sites recorded within Meridian's Area of City Impact. However, the Five Mile Creek is noted in Ada County's 2006 Historic Preservation Plan as a potential site for archaeological exploration. Crossing of this facility requires a permit from the Army Corps

of Engineers which triggers a site investigation for historic and cultural resources.

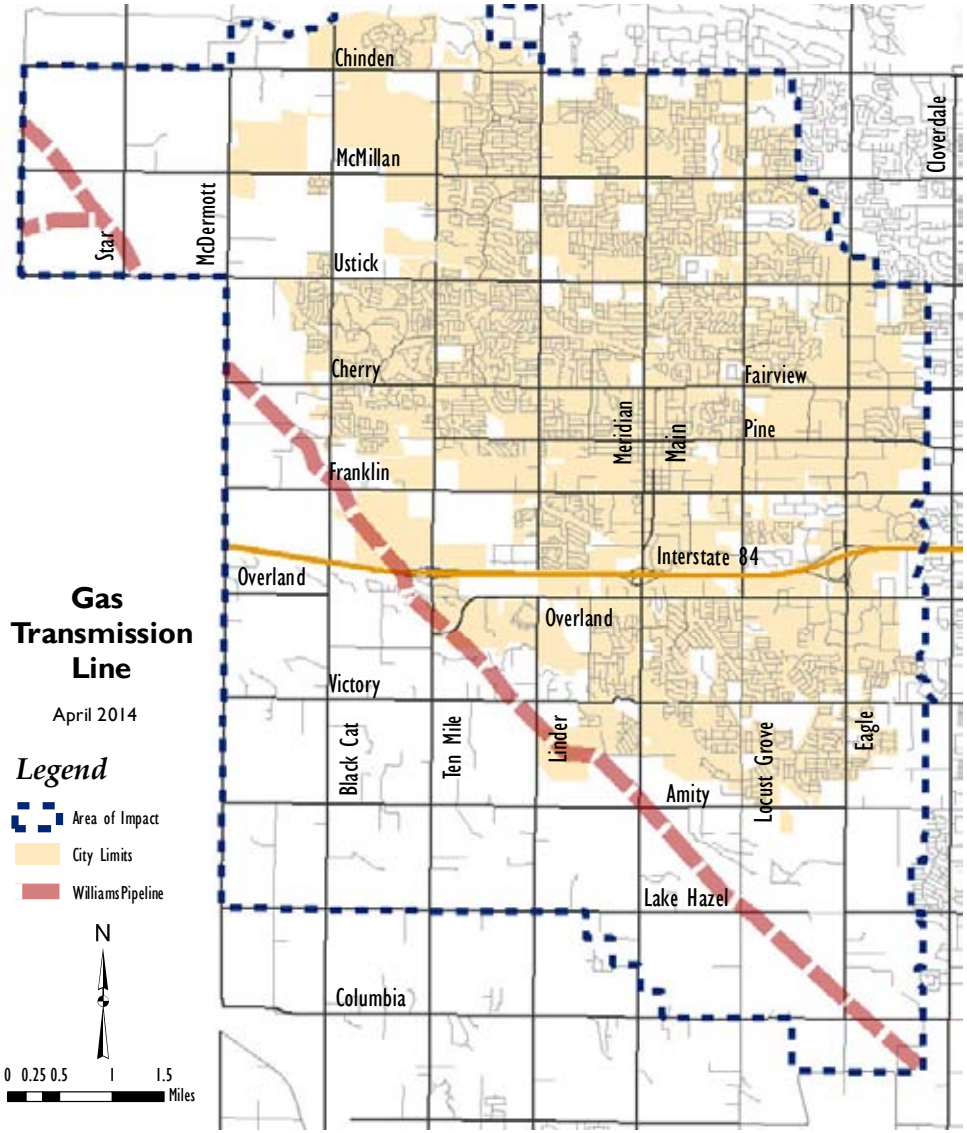
Hazardous Areas

Besides floodplains, some heavy industry located primarily near the rail corridor, and gas stations scattered throughout the community, there are few other hazards or hazardous areas that are noteworthy in the Meridian area. Without large industrial complexes, an airport, petroleum tank farms and other uses which tend to generate safety and pollution concerns, the City of Meridian is relatively free of hazardous areas which plague larger metropolitan areas. As more development occurs however, safety and hazardous areas will likely increase from more service stations, increased traffic, and storage and conveyance of hazardous chemicals associated with certain businesses. While federal regulations provide protection to a degree, as development increases, so will the potential for spills, accidents, and fires.

Natural Gas Pipeline

As shown in Figure 5C, there is a high-pressure natural gas pipeline that runs through the northwest and southwest areas of Meridian. This pipeline operates at a maximum pressure of 850 PSIG and carries only natural gas. There is typically a 75-foot wide easement that is associated with the pipeline. Coupled with the gas transmission pipeline, there is an existing liquefied natural gas plant located in the northwest part of the Area of City Impact, at 4014 N. Can-Ada Road. Liquefied natural gas is gas that has been converted temporarily to liquid form for ease of storage or transport; liquefied natural gas takes up about 1/600th the volume of natural gas in the gaseous state. It is odorless, colorless, non-toxic and non-corrosive. Hazards include flammability, freezing and asphyxia. The City and the gas company have

FIGURE 5C: GAS TRANSMISSION PIPELINE



Note: This map shows the general location of gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines under Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration jurisdiction. All pipelines are not represented on this figure. Contact the appropriate pipeline operator prior to excavation activities.
Source: National Pipeline Mapping System website, 2010: www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov

Physical Features

certain restrictions and specific provisions when developing on or around the gas pipeline.

State Highways

State Highways are typically posted for higher-speeds and are considered by many in the community to be hazardous. There are four ITD roadways that currently traverse through Meridian: Interstate 84, SH 55 (Eagle Road), U.S. 20/26 (Chinden Boulevard), and SH 69 (Meridian Road). Many of the accidents that occur in Meridian are along State Highways. The City has worked, and will continue to work with ITD, ACHD and COMPASS on improving safety along State Highways for motorists and pedestrians. Some of the safety projects that the City would like to see include: additional pedestrian facilities, intersection improvements, and improved access management.

Weeds

There are vast and far reaching economic and environmental impacts of invasive weeds. Idaho has about 800 of the nation's 2,000 weed species present, most of which are alien to the state. Noxious weeds overwhelm native plant communities and disturbed areas, spreading steadily year by year. Importing natural controls is not possible for all weeds, and may take many years and significant financial resources to introduce natural controls. Therefore, it is important to educate and implement aspects of weed management. Prevention and inspection are the most economical management system for reducing the rate of noxious weed spread.

Floodplains

The City of Meridian is a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and regulates development in flood prone areas. Although located in the high desert, over 24 miles of intermittent and year-round streams are found within Meridian's Area of City Impact. These streams are unique because they also serve an irrigation purpose. These dual-purpose waterways have been channelized and widened to allow them to carry large flows in the event of a canal failure. Even though the streams have been modified each stream has associated Special Flood Hazard Areas. Flood events have occurred in the early spring when rain and rapid snowmelt combine. Meridian has experienced such flooding events in 1963 and 1982.

Because certain areas of Meridian are affected by Special Flood Hazard Areas (Figure 5D), the City has developed Floodplain Overlay Districts (FP Districts). All development in FP Districts is regulated through permits and includes activities such as grading, filling, building structures, and even storage of materials. The purpose of the FP Districts is to guide development in the flood-prone areas of any watercourse that is consistent with the requirements for the conveyance of flood flows and to minimize the expense and inconveniences to the individual property owners and the general public caused by flooding.

Meridian currently maintains good standing in the NFIP by meeting or exceeding minimum floodplain development standards. Additionally, Meridian's floodplain administration program is evolving to provide more benefits to residents.

Idaho has about 800 of the nation's 2,000 weed species present, most of which are alien to the state. Noxious weeds overwhelm native plant communities and disturbed areas, spreading steadily year by year.

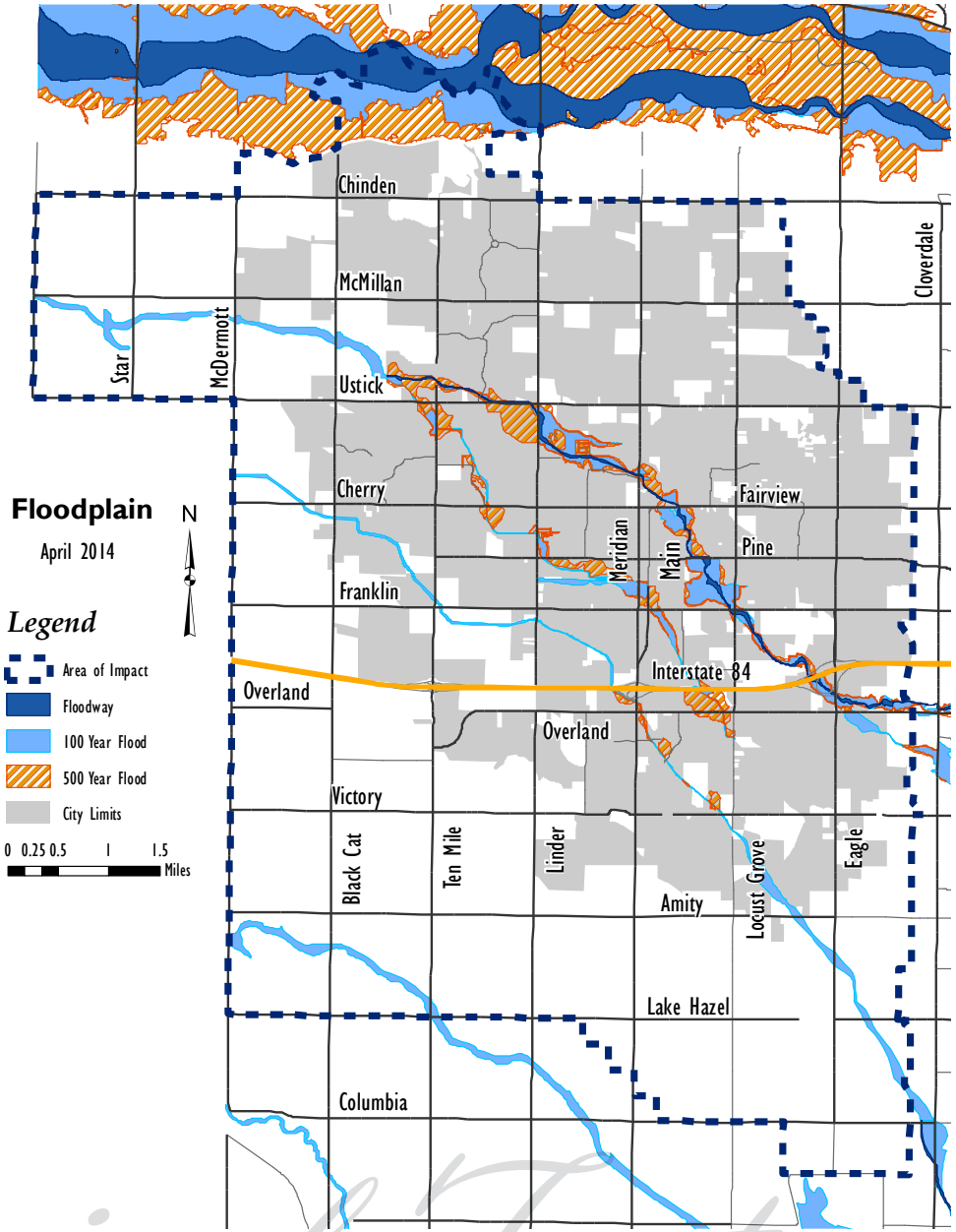
Meridian seeks to become a member of the Community Rating System, an NFIP program that rewards communities that go above and beyond the minimum program requirements by giving their residents discounts on flood insurance premiums. The program includes activities in Public Information, Mapping, Flood Damage Reduction, and Flood Preparedness.

National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors

During the 2007 Idaho State legislative session, the Local Land Use Planning Act was amended to require that Comprehensive Plans incorporate an additional element to address National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has been tasked with identifying national corridors.

Designating a National Corridor does not constitute a recommendation or a proposal to build additional transmission facilities; it simply serves to spotlight the congestion or constraints adversely affecting consumers in an area. The DOE issued two draft National Corridor designations; one in the Northeastern States and one in the Southwestern States. The State of Idaho is indirectly affected as several transmission facilities either cross the state or emanate from the state toward the congested area. Idaho Power has provided maps illustrating their current and proposed facilities within the Meridian Area of City Impact and the Treasure Valley. Should the Idaho State Public Utilities Commission notify the County of other federally mandated corridors, the Comprehensive Plan and this report will need to be updated.

FIGURE 5D: MERIDIAN FLOODPLAINS



Source: City of Meridian Planning Division, 2014.

Physical Features

6 Summary

This report is a companion to the City's Comprehensive Plan, last adopted in April of 2011, and most recently amended November 2013. By separating relevant information about the City's history, present day conditions, trends, and current strategic plan for its future, the Existing Conditions Report 2014 allows the Comprehensive Plan to be a clear and concise vision document. By understanding what Meridian's resources are, its history, and some of its recent initiatives, this document serves to identify planning, policy, and services which should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. In this regard, the Existing Conditions Report is not only an invaluable planning and decision making tool, but a means to measure progress.

The source documentation for this report is largely composed of material which, with time, changes. Given that, the Existing Conditions Report is a living document, and as sufficient time has passed or significant changes occur within the City, updates will be made to retain its relevance as a companion document to the Comprehensive Plan. It is envisioned that this report will be updated approximately every three years.

Photo: Blue Cross of Idaho Campus on Eagle Road and Pine Avenue

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