

**The Honorable Tammy de Weerd
Mayor, City of Meridian
2014 State of the City
Building Meridian Together
February 5, 2014**

Thank you all for being here and braving the elements. I can tell you that the year 2013 brought a number of expansions. An expanded City Council, expanded Meridian Road, expanded shopping opportunities, and, expanded jobs. Through each of these expansions, there weaves a common thread: Public participation, collaborations, partnerships, and joint investment. When we listen, plan, communicate, and work together we can expect great outcomes.

The Village at Meridian is a perfect -- and breathtaking -- example. This project took a shared vision, years of planning, intense cooperation, and hard work in creating a magical place we call our village.

The theme *Building Meridian Together* seems so appropriate this year and in past years as well. We have been building our great community together.

Can I ask the house lights be raised? At this point I'd like our City Council, our directors, our employees, and our city volunteers to please stand. Now, stay standing. Now I would like our sponsors to please join them. And now our regional partners -- our city, county, state, and quasi-government. Now our businesses. Our citizens and faith leaders. Our youth and our educators. And if you are still sitting, please, stand up. It takes all of us to build this community together. You may be seated.

Over the past two years I have been focusing on specific community priorities during the State of the City addresses. I have reported on our progress, as well as some of our challenges. These areas were identified through listening to the feedback from our citizens. This data collected through our city surveys, through our Town Hall meetings and Coffee with the Mayor. It's also been through knocking on your door. These priorities haven't changed as their importance were recently reinforced through listening tours held in seven different areas of our community with a diverse group of stakeholders.

These priority areas are Safe Community; Responsive Government; Places To Go; Jobs; and Transportation. Not necessarily in that order. But we rely on working with our community partners to achieve results. We build Meridian together. These priority areas are important to our community and important to moving forward towards a common vision.

Number one. Safe Places. Meridian was named the safest city in Idaho by *CQ Press*. Exceptional quality of life and low crime don't just happen. We all work together across departmental lines to ensure quality and responsive services. We will not rest on our backside because of this designation, because we know that there is more to do. Now,

last year I committed to coming back and talking about our response times, to identify those key influencers that affect them and here is what we found.

(Video played.)

Now, those are some of the things that we found. Now we need to have those community conversations. Last year in our fire department we were stable. We have improved by five seconds. But in our police department we found we are now over four minutes on priority three calls and those are the lights and siren calls that are very important and we know that those four minutes can sometimes be the longest in your life. So, we are using new tools. We are using data analysis to look at things. We are huddling with our partners and are trying to figure out how we can stabilize those response times, because as the chief has said, once we get out the door we enter some unpredictable situations that can affect our response times. That community conversation needs to happen with our stakeholders, because we want to know what your expectations are of us on the response times and we need to share with you what that will cost. That's going to be very important.

This next area also takes some of these same tools that we used in technology and it's called DDACTS. You know, I don't know why they use acronyms like that, but it's almost easier to say than Data Driven Analysis of Crime and Traffic Systems. We have dedicated patrols. We have worked at getting our stakeholders and we are out there in enforcement to reduce crime and crashes. We use automated crime mapping like this. If you can see along the Eagle Road corridor you see a number of circles. Those circles indicate where our crimes and our crashes are happening. This is where we have assembled a team that is focused on that and because of that focus and the strategic approach that we initiated along this first one, we have seen a reduction in our numbers. We have seen a reduction in the numbers of serious crashes, down by 32 percent. We have seen a decrease in DUI's, drug offenses, shoplifting and vandalism. Overall we have seen a reduction in crime in this DDACT zone by almost 16 percent. I think that's pretty darn good. And you can clap on that one.

This next area is safety on the road and in our community and this really revolves and focuses on our youth. The first thing that we are really proud of is Alive at 25. This is about defensive driving training and it trains drivers between 15 and 24 and we have served or educated over 1,200 participants, which is one third of the total training in the state of Idaho. That's how passionate and aggressive our officers are in keeping people involved and they have shown that when you take this class the participants reduces their chances of being involved in serious accidents. The second is what our youth council has focused on.

Did you know that not wearing your seat belt is illegal, but did you know that it's not a primary offense, so our police cannot pull you over for that? So, right now our youth council are very committed in saying it should be a primary offense and so they are working with the legislature right now to make not wearing a seatbelt a primary offense for 18 and younger, because they believe that's where habits are formed.

We had two youth council members that recently were involved in the big pile up on I-84 - Brooklyn and Bryce. They were wearing their seat belts. Some of the conversations our youth have said is, if you choose to not wear your seat belt, it should not impact where their taxpayer dollars go to pay those medical bills the rest of their life. So, I join them in hoping that our legislature will allow the introduction of this law, that this legislation gets a hearing, so these youth voices can be heard.

Number two. Responsive government. Our goal is to be responsive to the citizens and customers we serve by finding efficiencies that save time and resources, and continue to improve our levels of service. As in the other priority areas, what we have seen over this last year is improved communication with our customers, cost savings, and leveraged resources by working with others.

This service-minded community has been an example of leveraging resources. Our citizens are eager to step forward when asked. In fact, I think our rock stars are here today. They serve at our front desk and welcome you as you walk into City Hall. They are an example of the citizens that we have that volunteer over 30,000 hours in our city. Seven thousand of those hours were by our youth council members.

Also on responsive government, I'd like to talk about water. Water conservation when there is not enough, and water when there is too much. We had a short irrigation season last year and an early shut-off that happened and we felt that it would have a real severe affect on our citizens and our ability to deliver service to them. So, we did a water curtailment plan and a communication plan. We sent out letters. We shared with our citizens what they could do to conserve and avoid peak demand hours and other such information and we avoided a real crises. Now, I think will there be another one -- possibly happening this year. Well, we will be prepared.

What we weren't quite expecting is what we saw in September. You remember that 25 to 50 year storm? We got one inch of water in three hours. That caused one million gallons of water to go through our wastewater treatment plant, so we had to figure out how to deal with it and that rapid response. We also had a discharge limit that has been placed on us through the EPA and DEQ through our NPDES permit. So, we didn't want to violate the flows that we are restricted to. So, we had our Public Works, our wastewater treatment plant workers, and our Parks Department huddle and come up with a plan on how to avoid that. We did have one day where we exceeded, but I can tell you because of the amounts of water that we were dealing with at that time we could have had a number of them. It took us 12 days to get it back to normal, but I really commend these workers for working hand in hand, arm in arm around the clock to make sure that our services were not affected.

Another area that we are very proud of -- and I know a number of our partners are sitting out in this audience. It's the Emergency Management Systems Joint Powers Agreement. The EMS-JPA. This is monumental in terms of the patients. Our number one priority is them receiving care in the most efficient and effective manner. We have now a singular

training platform, a set of medical protocols, one physician's oversight and purchasing processes that will save us money. We have a system-wide approach that now the closest unit responds when available and this is now a system without boundaries. This will reduce response times and get those services to our citizens at the quickest time.

We have also seen expanded citizen services at City Hall. Last year I talked about our passport services. Well, we have a year under our belt and last year we helped with over 2,200 passports to our citizens. This year Ada County West -- we were a property tax payment location. Ada County came to us and asked us if we would help them out and it was amazing. In 15 days nearly 500 people used our counter to pay their property taxes. And I would like to thank Vicky McIntyre, our Finance Department and our City Clerk for coming up with this and we will see it again in June.

Number three. Places to go. This is a favorite and certainly we are not at a shortage of places to go in our community. Partnerships have played a key role in building our park system. When I got involved with the city in the mid '90s, Mayor Corrie asked me to get involved. We had one park. Today we have 20. This tremendous progress has been through partnerships, leveraging our tax dollars. For example, in Settlers Park, for every dollar we spend, more than two dollars have been matched through growth fees and partnerships. Currently, we are working with the Meridian, the Idaho, and the US Tennis Association on a more recent phase in this very park.

Another great partner in our parks and recreation has been the school district. They have been awesome in offering their indoor spaces to our adult sport leagues. We have far exceeded what they can provide, however, their facilities are seeing more and more use for school and community purposes as well.

Just last year we had over 450 sports teams with 4,600 participants that enjoyed these indoor spaces. This community has been asking for indoor facilities for more than two decades that I have been involved.

We are looking at two partnerships, each with a unique set of reasons, that meet those collective needs. Both provide safe places for kids and for teens. The first one I will focus on is the Boys & Girls Club.

A safe place for kids. Now, folks, you can see these statistics up on the screen. They serve a critical need for some of our most vulnerable kids. And it's pretty exciting some of the things that are going on in that area. Meridian Elementary with their community garden and their accessible playground and now with the Medical Residency of Idaho building a medical clinic in partnership with the school district, there are some great partnerships going on there. Well, we want to partner with the Boys and Girls Club to help them meet the space challenge, because no child should be turned away, especially some of the children that they serve. They are looking at a gymnasium facility and a capital campaign. Their capital campaign is a 3.5 million dollar campaign. Of that 2.5 million is in Meridian. And the City wants to step up and be a partner to that drive and see that gymnasium happen. It will help our needs as well.

The second partnership is with the YMCA. This is indoor recreation and it's something that our families have been asking for. Now, the YMCA did an extensive survey with an interview process as a part of that and the results were not surprising. They showed the same thing that we have been hearing for the last two decades. We have unmet needs around healthy living, wellness, sports, and aquatics. The highest number of those that said that those are unmet needs are certainly from our residents with youth and teens at home. Meridian has been very reliant on Boise and Nampa facilities and I think it's time that we step up and we be a part of bringing those facilities to this community. So, we also plan to be a committed partner with the land space and recreation space and aquatics by an agency that brings wellness and healthy living changes and that's something we need in our community.

Can we raise the lights and ask any of the representatives of the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club, if you could, please, stand. You truly are an example of partnership.

Then there is downtown and we have seen great partnering with our downtown partners. That collaboration between the key partners of the City, the Meridian Development Corporation, the Chamber and the property owners and businesses have been phenomenal. Last year's goals were to enhance the signage in downtown to create areas for outdoor dining and to see some more events. So, I can say that we have made great progress.

We have seen way finding signage that you can find your way to the districts in our downtown and you can find where parking is. This kiosk will list where are the businesses in our downtown, so you can find them with ease. These are needed improvements that we have been asking for for a long time.

The parklet demonstration was intended to bring dining out onto the sidewalk where you could create that outdoor experience, that energy. Well, the weather didn't really cooperate, so we really didn't have a true idea of what the demonstration is, so we hope to do this again this coming year and I appreciate ACHD's collaboration in that.

We brought new events with Trunk or Treat that served over 2,000 kids and Christmas in Meridian was awesome for a first year event. We did learn some lessons. Stay tuned for next year.

But one of those areas I really want to focus on is our history walk. This was collaboration between the city, our Historical Preservation Commission and the MDC. You will be able to walk through our community and learn about our roots and learn about the history of a piece of property or an older building and you can click on the QR code and you can hear from longtime residents of Meridian talk about memories they have of old time Meridian. This is very exciting.

We also are thrilled with some of the efforts of the Meridian chamber who is working with stakeholders about the possibility of having a shuttle from hotels to area restaurants and

entertainment between downtown, the Village, and possibly other locations. They are working to improve the connectivity and this year we really want to bring more people into our downtown.

Another exciting thing you will be seeing downtown this year is public art, so stay tuned.

There is an opportunity, though, that I challenged everyone on last year and this is the McFadden property. That is a sad looking building that needs some tender loving care and we are looking for a champion, but we didn't quite find them yet. Well, now we have an expanded opportunity with almost the entire block and just look at what we could do on that block with the right partners. You can only imagine.

Number four. Jobs. The energy continues to be in Meridian. Our commercial investment had a large showing at the Idaho Business Reviews Top Projects Awards. I would say we swept the award ceremony that night with the Village, Scentsy's office complex, and the Meridian Split corridor. These three projects were valued at 200 million dollars in 2013, with a total investment expected of 350 million dollars.

The Village at Meridian has caused a great deal of excitement. It's not only the talk of the town, the talk of the valley, the talk of the state, it's received national attention. Most of the talk, though, has not been about their awesome investment and the new jobs it created in which they employed between 400 and 600 construction jobs daily for over a year. Nor was it about their corporate philanthropy, their giving back to the community supporting the arts, which has been phenomenal. The talk has been all about the magic. Just watch.

(Video played.)

Now, that is something to cheer about. I mean that is awesome. And in talking to Fred Bruning out in our audience earlier, there are more exciting announcements to talk about in the weeks and months ahead. They have added to our numbers certainly.

Our number of jobs grew by over 1,400 over this last year. Of those what is exciting is we netted over 900 in healthcare, administrative, professional, and scientific. We netted 250 in our retail and food. The city's unemployment is low at five percent, well below the national average at 6.7.

Community investments totaled more than 400 million dollars in 2013, with over 33 percent of that in commercial projects. These are a number of the businesses that have opened their doors. Now, this is not an inclusive list, but it just shows you some of the energy that we have had over this last year in celebrating ribbon cuttings with our partners, the Chamber of Commerce out there with their large scissors and their enthusiasm with their ambassadors. It's truly been a great year with a lot of new things coming down the pike right now.

A couple of those -- the Scentsy building was exciting, opening up their six story office complex, with more news to come. We also saw St. Luke's open up their Meridian outpatient surgery center and Touchmark at Meadow Lake with their expansion. We have also seen expanding Kendall Ford and Camping World. Those are under construction. United Heritage is also building a second building, which is in progress.

So, let me focus on two upstarts. Bounceboard. They are part of the Rec-Tech industry. They specialize in the development and the worldwide distribution of trampoline air awareness training boards. Now, that's a mouth full. But these are for world class athletes or any athlete who wants to improve their skills. They started out at Boise State University's TECenter and that was in 2010 and they saw their sales double in 2012.

Forward Movement Training is a focus on law enforcement and military ultimate tactical training. They also work with citizens and firearm safety and how to react in case of an emergency and gain self-defense skills. They will bring visitors into the area, which is good for Meridian and good for the valley. It's also compatible with an industry cluster that is naturally evolving, along with a project soon to be under construction, that is unprecedented in the city.

Now, you know our slogan -- Designed for Living, Built for Business. Okay. I turned it around. I wanted to really, truly focus on what we are doing to build our businesses through identifying and planning for industry clusters. We are all familiar with the CORE, which sees continued success and is setting a new vision for adding value to the businesses that are members. We have identified two other clusters that have a natural fit here in Meridian. One centered around the training and supplying of our first responders and the other building on our region's core competencies in agriculture and technology.

When we first talked about the public safety district that Forward Movement Training is part of, but here is a list of some of those potential partners that you will see that are here in Meridian or on their way here. We also can talk about our safety center. It's located next door to the Idaho State Police headquarters, P.O.S.T., and ISU's emergency management and Fire Services campus. It will be the first shared use of a public safety training center in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. It's for our first responders and this is the unprecedented part of it, our fire, our police, our public works departments are all working together and will have shared training in this facility. Now, this facility will have classrooms, a training mat, simulation, and a canine training area. What's exciting, too, is the scenario village. We will be partnering with P.O.S.T. and ISP and many of our businesses to create a scenario village where we can all come and train together as a region. This will begin here soon and the completion date is targeted for June or July of 2015.

I just want to spend a moment on the Fields District as well. Phase one was completed and what phase one did is it took a white paper that we wrote a number of years ago and started talking to the region leaders and stakeholders and said does this approach make sense and what is it? They brought this information back to our City Council for a go or a no go recommendation. They brought a recommendation to move forward. City Council

agreed with them. Now, this will support our agricultural and bio science and research and innovation area. This next step is creating the vision, establishing what an appropriate land use is, identifying partners and putting together an information plan with the implementation steps to it.

Now, if we are talking about workforce or employers, we know that workforce is very important. So, I do want to talk about an upcoming election. For business attraction and retention, I can't tell you how important an educated workforce is and I will ask you to educate yourselves as voters as will be asked on March 11th if they will approve the Joint School District No. 2's supplemental levy. Our school district is over 380 square miles large. It covers Meridian, Boise, Star, Eagle, parts of Canyon and Ada County. I will be supporting our schools, our teachers that inspire our kids and, most importantly, our kids by personally voting yes on this levy.

Our last area is transportation. Transportation has made great strides over the last several years working with our partners. The Ten Mile interchange was a transformative change for west Meridian. We are just about to see the beginnings of what those positive outcomes will do for our community as well in jobs.

2013 brought the completion of two major transportation projects. We saw other system improvements that made a positive difference in your ability to get around our town. Has anyone noticed the blinking yellow lights in the turn signals? Aren't those awesome? I love those. It gets me to work faster. More exciting news is also coming up. ACHD will be evaluating and recalibrating 42 intersections and retiming our traffic lights. These projects should be completed in March.

We saw the improvement of Franklin Road, a widening, and we brought in our water and sewer infrastructure. So, we are ready for this area to expand.

Our split corridor, phase two, was a major improvement. It was very exciting the day that this nine and a half million dollar project opened up 33 days ahead of schedule. That was awesome. We not only had an expanded roadway that allows our drivers to go through and get to our downtown, we saw improvements in our water and sewer and the reliability of the service that we provide in that area by laying down the water and sewer line. We saw lighted sidewalks and let me spend a moment on the cash mob. What a great partnership between the city, the Chamber, and our MDC and our downtown businesses. This was essential to these businesses seeing our community support during this time. It was really hard on them and you coming together and standing up and being there to support them was greatly appreciated, but I will ask you to continue to support them, because they really do need to make up for some lost time.

Now, the new and exciting news -- and it's not new -- we have been planning for the Meridian Road interchange expansion. This is amazing as well. And you probably have seen some work already start in this area. They are moving utility lines, they are widening two bridges that serve the Ten Mile Creek and we will have a contractor on board next month with construction to begin this spring. Construction will be completed by late 2015.

The design is a Single Point Urban Interchange design similar to what we see out at Ten Mile interchange. It's called a SPUI. And this project also includes the rehab of two outside lanes of I-84 between Meridian Road and Five Mile. They have assured us that they will not be closing roads or lanes, that the lanes will be open during construction and in both directions. If you want updates you can go onto ITD's website and request Meridian interchange updates and you can get those and I would encourage you to do that, it will keep you well informed.

So, the last area of transportation is really connecting and making a more robust mobility plan that's not just about a road. Our pathways have seen a number of improvements and we received an easement this last year, so we should be completing a major segment in our Five Mile Creek path and that will start next month and be done this summer. We have been working with Nampa, Kuna, and Boise exploring ways to connect. We have had pathway signage and we will be adding mile markers.

The Rail With Trail is still on my list of expectations for this community. We got a grant last year from the highway administration for arterial road crossing. That will begin this month and will end in July. Figuring out how to safely cross the arterials is going to be key to moving forward.

As we talk about connecting, we have been thrilled to connect with an energetic group of young leaders and they have taken charge. Just watch.

(Video played.)

These are awesome kids. Will you guys stand up. These students are not just creating a big difference in our community, they are creating their own legacy. They energize and inspire me and I get so much from working together. We have a hundred members and 70 very active ones. So, kudos to Ken Corder who also has learned how to herd cats.

I am also inspired by and celebrate both the generosity and gift from Eugene Kleiner in memory of his father. Last year the city passed a resolution dedicating the second Saturday of June to honor this 25 million dollar gift and the extraordinary example of selfless philanthropy. Proceeds from this State of the City will not just fund youth scholarships, but it also is going to fund the Meridian Symphony to play at this annual celebration in this beautiful park. We have been working with the Kleiner Trust and Eugene for over a decade creating a vision that so many have enjoyed over this last year. Julius Kleiner has owned that land since 1944 and he created a legacy through his giving, memorializing his family and the history of this land and challenging others to participate to pay it forward in countless new acts of service, either big or small, across the community and region.

This is why I am so pleased to announce that the Legacy Award this year goes to Eugene Kleiner and the Kleiner Trust. Will you, please, come forward. Okay. That means Elden Gray and Mike Huter. You have to come forward. It's always great to get a foot up on this

man. Who, by the way, happens to be a coattail cousin or something like that. But Elden Gray has been a huge champion of this park. The Kleiner Trust has been placed in this man's hands, the construction of the park and all of the -- the herding of cats in his own realm and it's certainly my honor -- and, unfortunately, Eugene and his son Mike couldn't be here with us. We tried to get Elden to help us bring him here, but I didn't tell Elden that he was getting the award, too. So, thank you very much, Elden. This for you.

These were men of value that we recognize and it is unfortunate that not all four could be here, but it's very fitting that I was able to give this to Elden. When I speak of men of value, it comes to mind a quote from Albert Einstein: Try not to become a man of success, rather, become a man of value. A successful man takes out of life more than he puts in. A man of value will give more than he receives. That truly reflects these gentlemen.

Now, we have an amazing community. We have truly been building a great Meridian together. What I really enjoy about Meridian is that we want to keep our small town feel no matter how much we grow. That we will stand up and support businesses like Big Daddy's BBQ when someone ran into the front of this business or with Friday's cash mob helping 77 year old Steve DiMaria, the owner of the Taste of Chicago food stand outside of RiteAid, get back on his feet.

We are a community that rallies around our youth by supporting young leaders like MYAC who want to make a positive impact on their environment and our community. Like the Meridian Middle School students you probably met coming in that are headed to Washington D.C. to represent Meridian and this valley and this state at the Future City national competition -- building sustainable cities for the future.

Remember the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA in your future giving. Watch for these capital campaigns and step up and be a part of them. The youth and the family that these organizations serve are essential to a vibrant community. We need to work together in building our youth and our families and it's because of people like you working together hand in hand to work our vision of being a premier city to live, work and raise a family -- we can taste it and we want more. We have a Meridian that has caught a great deal of attention. We have seen tremendous investment by people who believe in our vision. People are proud to call Meridian home of their business and their residence.

You have built Meridian. We are Meridian. And I am honored and blessed to serve you as your Mayor. Thank you.