



STATE OF DOWNTOWN

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STATE OF DOWNTOWN ANNUAL MEETING HOSTED BY



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Ready to *roll*

By Kâren Sander

Downtown Boise
Association



PHOTO BY
STEVE MARTIN / IBR

Downtown Boise poised for next stages of development

More than ever before, Business Improvement Districts around the country are being called upon to do more to keep downtowns vibrant and healthy in an economy that is increasingly challenging. This is also true for downtown Boise.

Business Improvement Districts (BID), like any other business, are tightening their belts as we see diminishing revenues from sponsorships, assessments and events. We have to be strategic in our spending and our planning, so that we are positioned to thrive.

Our responsibility of keeping downtown Boise top of mind in the community becomes even more critical as we strive to take advantage of the diminishing pool of funds available and the fierce competition for those dollars. The choices people make in where they dine, shop and seek entertainment become increasingly based on value, and thus excellent service and the overall experience are paramount.

We must continue to develop and support our own unique brand, giving reasons for anyone to be a downtown customer, not just once but for a lifetime. We want our community to put their money where their mouth is and not only say "I love my downtown" but to spend their dollars here.

As stewards of the dollars invested by downtown businesses, we continually look at ways to maximize those dollars, including: leveraging our marketing dollars with sponsorships, thus increasing our frequency and reach of message; partnering with other agencies to maximize contracts and efficiencies of work schedules; seeking out grant funding for downtown improvements; making use of free sources of promotion through social marketing avenues; and continuing to be creative in our promotions

and events to attract thousands to downtown every year.

We are pleased to have launched a "Parking Inventory" page on our Web site, www.downtownboise.org, which is a tool that office tenants, property owners and managers can use to seek out all available parking spaces to lease. Another is www.downtown-boiseliving.com, a Web site that gathers all downtown Boise urban living options and information into one location.

We have launched Downtown Boise on Facebook and Twitter, and promote Alive After Five on MySpace. We are making new "friends and followers" every day, and providing opportunities for our businesses to get the word out about their products and services to audiences not previously tapped into.

Events and promotions that were started many years ago – including Alive After Five which is in its 23rd year and First Thursday in its 20th year – are now just two of many promotions and events that we organize to attract people to downtown. We are also building on the recent successes of promotions, including a Mother's Day raffle, Summer Sidewalk Sale, Jazz on the Grove fall concert, the Holiday Tree Lighting, collaborations with Boise State University new student programs, and the downtown Bronco Shuttle that continue to keep Downtown Boise the best place to work, shop, live and play.

It is important that downtown organizations stay the course, focusing on long-term initiatives so that once we come out of this downturn, we are ahead of our competition. Looking to the future, we realize we have an advantage over where downtown was in the '70s and '80s. Crime is down, infrastructure has been strengthened and modernized, new development has taken place and many government agencies understand the importance of our

urban centers. As quoted by Indianapolis developer Cornelius "Lee" Alig: "Cities are measured by the strength of their urban centers." (Source: Downtown Idea Exchange).

However, we still have many long-term initiatives that we cannot lose focus of, including those we have stated many times before:

- Work together to establish a common vision and plan for Downtown Boise and support the city's effort to reinforce the role of Downtown Boise as the city and region's civic, cultural, and employment center. (Blueprint Boise).
- Establish a funding mechanism to provide efficient public transit, which would ease access and commute times to and from Downtown Boise.
- Create incentives for urban infill development that would counter rural sprawl.
- Develop work force housing initiatives to bring the housing options closer to the concentration of employment.
- Expand the mix of retail to include a variety of services for residents.
- Make downtown redevelopment a priority to attract future work force talent to a vibrant and economically stable environment.

Thomas Edison wrote that "Opportunity is missed by many people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." We have our sleeves rolled up and our overalls on and are ready to do the work to continue to make our downtown thrive.

Kären Sander is the executive director of the Downtown Boise Association.

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Downtown Indicators



Downtown Office

Current office vacancy within the downtown core is 9.5 percent or approximately 330,000 square feet of direct vacant and sublease space. Several office projects slated for the downtown have been put on hold as the current economic turmoil takes its toll on office tenants. Despite the downturn, downtown is still one of the strongest office sub markets of the Treasure Valley when compared to the overall Treasure Valley vacancy rate of 14.6 percent. The recent addition of the Water Cooler incubator space is beginning to show dividends as several of the startup companies are making headway in spite of the economy. Landlords and tenants are looking to shorter-term leases during this cycle. Tenants are unsure what the future holds and landlords are reluctant to lock in long-term leases at unfavorable lease rates.

Downtown Retail

Downtown continues to attract tenants even during these challenging economic times. During 2008 we lost several beloved eateries and small merchants but with vacancy comes the opportunity for other retailers to fill the empty spaces. Eight new retail shops have opened in downtown in the last year, which has helped stabilize the vacancy at 11.65 percent. Over the past few years the downtown has been populated with a number of national retailers – Anthropologie, Ann Taylor Loft, P.F. Chang’s, etc. The newest addition is North Face, which opened this holiday season in the ground floor of the historic Mode building.

Some retailers are using the economic slowdown to reinvent themselves. Hal Davis Jewelers and Idaho Mountain Touring are using the economic slowdown to remodel stores and streamline operations. Hal Davis recently renovated the Idaho Independent Bank building at 10th and Jefferson streets. Idaho Mountain Touring has completed a “green remodel” of 18,000 square feet, adding a Patagonia store-within-a-store concept to its extensive line of outdoor gear.

Downtown Hotels

The current occupancy for most of the downtown hotels is nearly 60 percent, above the industry average of 58 percent, but well off the highs of past years. The worst may still be ahead as the trend line for the first quarter of 2009 shows a dismal 47 percent occupancy or 14 percent decline from the same period of 2008. The change in the corporate landscape and the oversupply of limited service rooms throughout the valley continues to drive down overall hotel occupancy and room rate.

Downtown Residential Projects

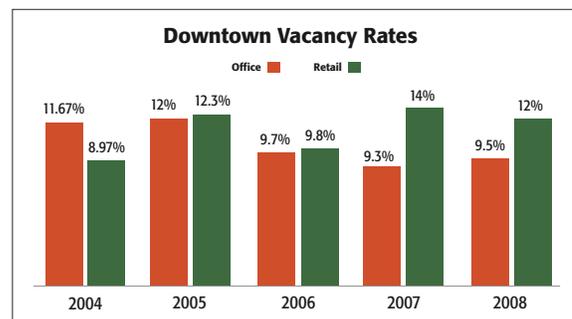
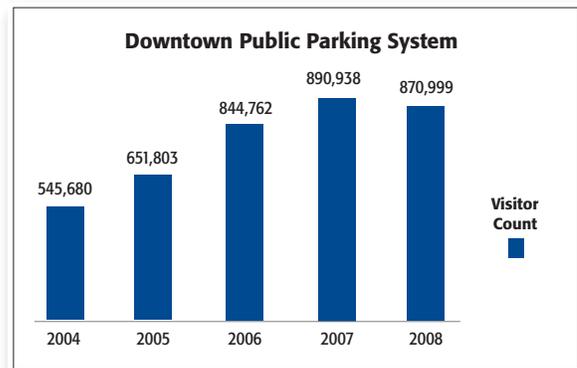
Downtown residential development continues despite softening market conditions. Currently 260 units are under construction or just completed. Projects range from a mid-market to luxury condominium units. Announced prices for the for-sale units range from \$150,000 to \$1.5 million. Developers are optimistic that decreasing interest rates coupled with recently approved tax credits for first-time buyers will provide added incentive to purchasers in the near term.

Residential units completed: 181

- 77 City Side lofts (condos)
- 26 Royal Plaza (condos)
- 20 Grand Ave. Homes (townhomes)
- 42 The Jefferson (condos)
- 16 R Grey Lofts (condos)

Residential units under construction: 79

- 70 Aspen (condos)
- 9 Gem/Noble Building (condos)



(Sources: Colliers International and Capital City Development Corp.)

Resourceful & resilient

Downtown Boise can lead our economic renaissance

By Mayor David H. Bieter

Over the past several months, as the economic news both locally and across the nation has gone from gray to grim, one fact has brightened my outlook and continues to do so:

We live in Boise. And that makes all the difference.

This is a resourceful, resilient city, one that has weathered downturns in the past and has always emerged sooner and in better shape than our peers elsewhere.

Despite all of Boise's inherent assets – great climate, excellent schools, safe neighborhoods and abundant opportunities – we operate at something of a disadvantage. As the most geographically isolated metropolitan area in the Lower 48, things literally don't come easy to us; we have to work harder and smarter than our competitors do even during prosperous periods.



Boise Mayor
David H. Bieter

Rocky Balboa did one-arm pushups so he could punch harder with both fists. Likewise, Boise is always training against adversity, so we possess the reserves of strength to get

us through the tough times and help us shine once we emerge.

Leading the way in that economic renaissance: Downtown Boise. The urban core of Idaho's capital is a principal economic driver for the Treasure Valley and the state as a whole during good times, and it will become more so as we leave the bad days behind.

Even in the midst of recession, our city center has continued to exhibit signs of vitality. Our mainstream media seem unfairly fixated on downtown business closings, but over the past year several new restaurants and retailers have opened.

Downtown played host to several activities associated with the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games and enjoyed its liveliest winter season in years as a result. And downtown's rebirth as a residential neighborhood continues, with the Aspen Lofts (shown at right), CitySide Lofts, Grand Avenue Townhomes and Jefferson condominium projects bringing more than 260 units online.

Transforming downtown into a place where people live as well as work and play will become even more crucial in light of the economic transformation now taking place. Richard Florida, the man who first described creativity as a key economic driver, predicts that the new economy will necessitate a new way of living – a new geography – for those communities that hope to rebuild prosperity.

"It will be a more concentrated geography," Florida wrote in last month's *Atlantic* magazine, "one that allows more people to mix more freely and interact more efficiently ... Serendipitously,

it will be a landscape suited to a world in which petroleum is no longer cheap by any measure. But most of all, it will be a landscape that can accommodate and accelerate invention, innovation, and creation – the activities in which the U.S. still holds a big competitive advantage."

I don't wear sunglasses, much less rose-colored ones; I acknowledge that there may be more months of struggle ahead for our city and its downtown. But though the downturn may prompt us to adjust our plans and delay our timetables, we must not let it undermine our commitment.

Florida says we must make smarter use of our cities and suburbs alike – encouraging walkable development, building rail systems, and improving quality of life. The places that will thrive in the post-recession world, he says, "are those with the highest velocity of ideas, the highest density of talented and creative people, the highest rate of metabolism."

That sounds a lot to me like Boise and its downtown. In the end, all those one-arm push-ups will really pay off.

David H. Bieter is the mayor of Boise.

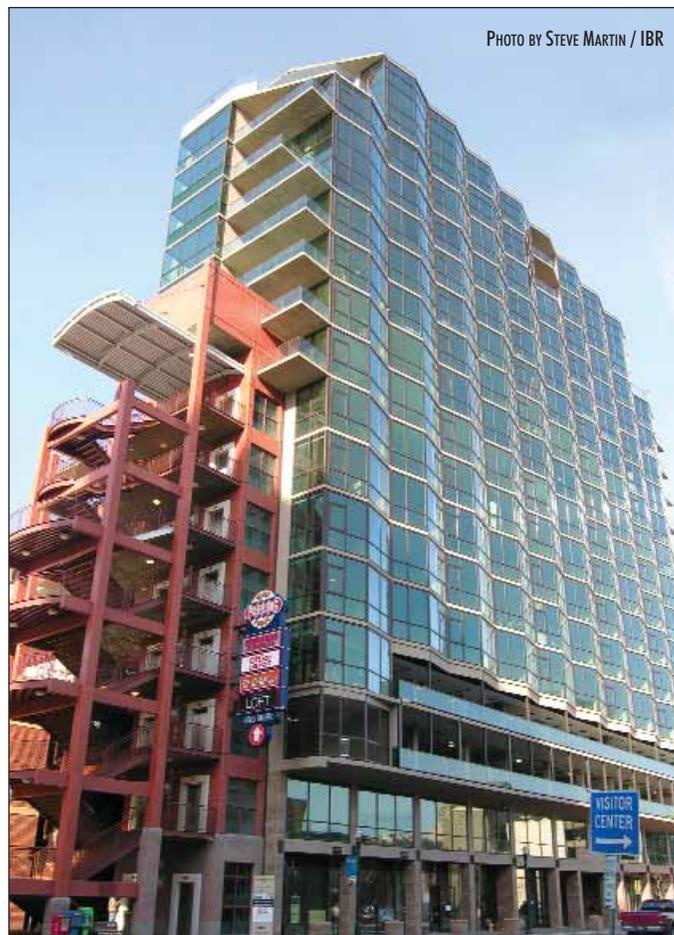


PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITAL CITY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Walking toward the future

Pedestrian-friendly downtowns spur fiscal vitality

By Phil Kushlan

Capital City Development Corp.

Every journey begins with a step.

Walking is the most basic of human activities. It is the first milestone in childhood development and it is the organizing principle of the earliest human settlements. The older parts of cities around the world are designed at a “walkable” human scale. Relatively young cities in the West, like Boise, were built around horses, wagons, streetcars and trains and parts of downtown still show their pedestrian-friendly origins.

We now are familiar with the research that shows how America’s dependence on the automobile damages our cities, our neighbor-

hoods, our environment and our health. The automobile industry’s economic problems appear to be closely linked with the current recession. Like any other dependency, cars are a hard habit to break. So many of our communities, and so much of our lives, are organized around the car that most of us simply can’t imagine getting through a single day without them.

Vital downtowns and their close-in neighborhoods provide an antidote to the ills brought on by the automobile. Increasingly, people are moving to where they are closer to work, schools, shopping and entertainment options, and to each other. They want to be able to walk to their desti-

“People want to be able to walk to their destinations, but in order to leave the car behind, walking has to be attractive, convenient and interesting.”

Phil Kushlan, CCDC

nations, but in order to leave the car behind, walking has to be attractive, safe, convenient and interesting.

These pedestrian-friendly options are found only in downtowns. This is the kind of environment that the DBA, city government and CCDC have been promoting for many years, with excellent results. Boise's investments in its downtown have paid benefits in an attractive pedestrian realm, a lively cultural scene, growing residential options and a diverse economy.

We are in the midst of a serious economic downturn and there is a tendency toward hesitation and retreat. Now is precisely the time actively to invest in our future, however. Infrastructure investments made now will better prepare us to capitalize on the eventual upturn. CCDC's long-term investments in downtown planning and place-making help strengthen the whole region.

The Grove Plaza, begun in the recession of the '80s, is an example of a stimulus investment "out in the middle of a bunch of gravel parking lots" that ushered a bold transformation of a part of downtown that most of us now take for granted. We need to look at other bold investments: in new urban housing options, educational and cultural needs like a main library and a robust regional transit system anchored by a downtown streetcar.

Downtowns are where people gather and bump into each other. It's where the chain reactions begin that lead to new ideas, new businesses and new ways of doing things. People are the raw material of the new economy, and a lively downtown is the environment in which the energy is generated. Cities drive the American economy.

According to a recent Brookings Institution report, the country's 100 largest metropolitan areas, of which Boise is one, cover just 12 percent of the nation's area but generate two-thirds of its jobs and three-quarters of its economic output. The Boise metro alone accounts for 48 percent of Idaho's economic product.

When the inevitable recovery occurs, will we merely restart the course we were on before or will we find a different future before us? I believe that we need to invest in a new kind of future to remain competitive. We do need good roads, because we won't completely abandon cars any time soon, but we won't build a better future by just adding lanes to highways.

Long-term recovery is not hastened by investing in the same systems that got us into trouble in the first place. The journey to a better future begins with taking many more steps. We need to invest in education, in creativity and in the green industries that will reverse problems created by the industries of the past. We need to invest in our cities because that's where our population is migrating and where our wealth increasingly is generated. Idaho's future lies squarely in its downtowns and their close-in neighborhoods.

Phil Kushlan is the executive director of the Capital City Development Corp.



PHOTO BY ZACH HAGADONE / IBR

Above: *Downtowns, including Boise, are where people gather. It's where the chain reactions begin that lead to new ideas, new businesses and new ways of doing things.*

Opposite page, top: *The Grove Plaza is an example of a stimulus investment that ushered a bold transformation of a part of downtown Boise most city residents now take for granted.*



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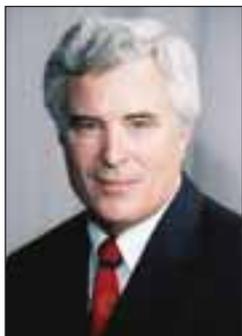
Put your best foot forward



Walkable downtowns can save the economy

By Zach Hagadone
Idaho Business Review

While many see the implosion of the housing market simply as a catastrophe, Christopher Leinberger, of the Brookings Institution, sees it as representative of a change in the way people think about living space – and an opportunity to build a more sustainable, people-friendly, built environment.



Christopher Leinberger

“It’s about building a different kind of American Dream, and the recognition that the market wants something different than what we in real estate have been building over the last half-century,” he said. “You don’t have to look very far to see the collapse of the housing market has been in suburban, drivable, fringe stuff. ... I’m guessing those higher density single-family houses and apartments around Hyde Park

have retained their value.”

Leinberger is an expert on real estate with an emphasis on downtown redevelopment. He will serve as keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Downtown Boise Association April 22, where he will talk about the significance of planning for walkability and what it means to communities during a period of slack economic growth.

He underscores the importance of building for high density and walkability by pointing out that the built environment is the largest asset class in the entire economy – over 35 percent of our wealth is tied up in our real estate and in the infrastructure that supports it. Of the last three downturns, two were caused by changes in the real estate market, he said.

“Until we start satisfying the market demand for walkable urban, put in the infrastructure that’s needed to make that happen, make it legal to build walkable urban space, the economy will not recover,”

he said. “Until we start deploying that and giving the market what it wants ... how does this economy get any traction?”

The first step toward creating walkable urban space is transportation, Leinberger said.

“Transportation drives development,” he said. “We’ve been building cities for 5,500 years and the transportation systems that societies select dictate the forms of those cities.”

No more potent symbol of that exists than the car: The post-war boom resulted in a car culture that said: “You can have any choice you want as long as it’s car-based,” Leinberger said. The upshot was a road and freeway system “stretched all over creation,” and the rise of the suburbs. Now, saddled with an aging car-centered infrastructure and the suburbs suffering in the housing downturn, communities across the country are looking back to the bus, the commuter

If you go:

To register for the 22nd Annual State of Downtown meeting where Christopher Leinberger is the keynote speaker:

- Visit www.downtownboise.org.
- Call Morgan Aucutt at 208-472-5251.

Ticket prices:

- Through April 20: \$30
- Beginning April 21: \$35

train and the streetcar.

“The most important infrastructure decision you will make in the early 21st century in Boise is putting in a rail transit system,” he said.

Portland, Ore. is an example of the stimulus to be gained by threading light rail or a streetcar system into urban centers, Leinberger said.

Portland’s streetcar line, paid for by parking revenues downtown, connected the former industrial Pearl district into the rest of the metro area, helping spur its revitalization into one of the city’s fastest-growing, and most highly valued, neighborhoods. All together, the streetcar line alone has resulted in \$3.5 billion in development.

“The key challenge is that the skeptics out there say nobody’s going to ride and there isn’t any place of high density to connect to. Maybe downtown is high density, but what about at the far end?” he said. “They forget that transportation drives development.

“Boise can learn from Denver, Portland, Seattle: you start small, you put in the streetcar plan or you put in one commuter rail line, and then you demonstrate just how popular it is,” he said.

Besides popularity with users, transit systems are also powerful economic development tools, and Leinberger said that’s ultimately the key factor in why cities should look to robust, walkable, urban areas for their economic resurgence.

“The fact of the matter is that if you don’t offer walkable urban development you’re not going to grow. And particularly with Boise – you’re a very high-tech town and you’re being driven by the knowledge economy,” he said. “... Highly educated people want to be in walkable urban places. ... If you want to attract the creative class,

the knowledge workers, you’d better give them what they want or they’re not coming.”

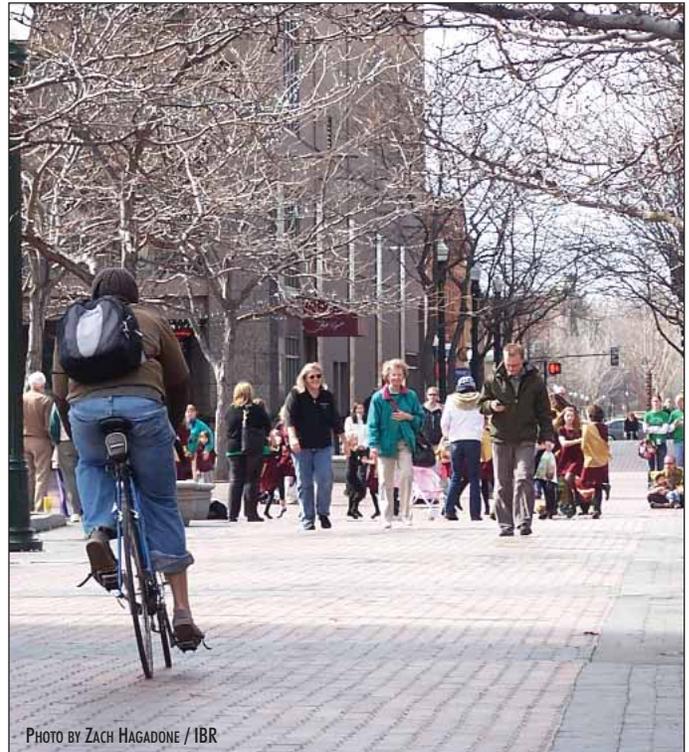


PHOTO BY ZACH HAGADONE / IBR

Above: Walkable urban places like the Grove Plaza attract all types of people, including “knowledge workers.”

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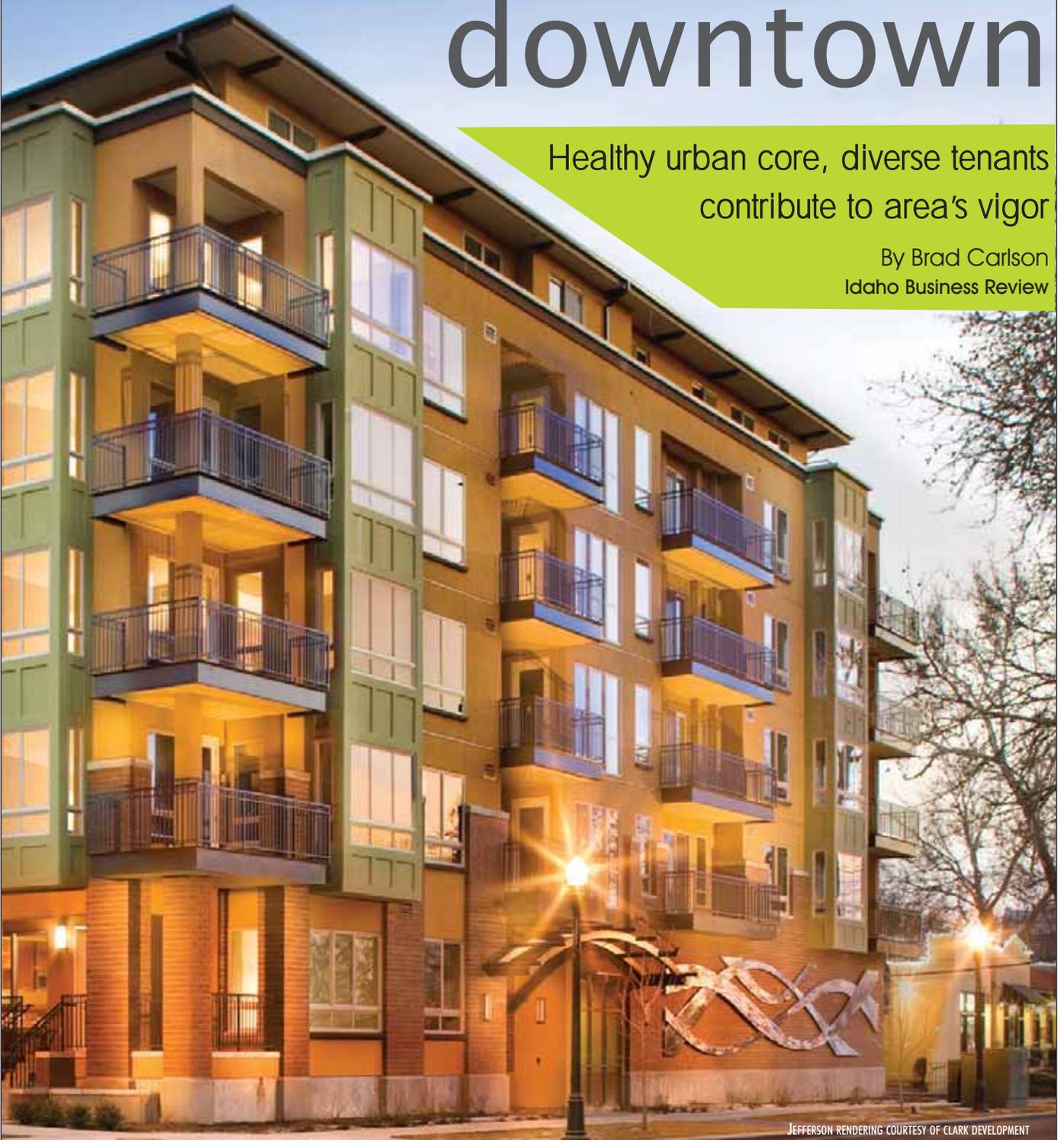


BANK OF THE CASCADDES

More than a daytime downtown

Healthy urban core, diverse tenants
contribute to area's vigor

By Brad Carlson
Idaho Business Review



JEFFERSON RENDERING COURTESY OF CLARK DEVELOPMENT

Downtown Boise is well positioned despite the U.S. economic downturn, several developers said recently.

Eric Davis owns Retail West Properties. With partner Eastbourne Investments, he's active in commercial real estate projects in the western half of the U.S. He bases Retail West in a downtown Boise space he owns in the Chase Bank (formerly Washington Mutual)-anchored Capitol Plaza, 199 N. Capitol Blvd.

"I can't think of a better location in the city or a better city in the West to be investing in," he said.

"Many cities in the country would love to have what Boise has, for all good reason," Davis said. He cited downtown Boise's nice, walkable downtown, attractive natural setting, eclectic mix of shops and restaurants, strong lineup of events, and convenient smaller scale. He travels around the U.S. frequently on business and has never heard anything bad about Boise, he said.

Downtown Boise shops The North Face, World Cycle, and various sporting goods and outdoor apparel stores cater to the healthy lifestyle that Boise exudes, he said.

"We should not take that for granted, and it's obvious that the retailers who are moving in are keying on it," Davis said, speaking of downtown and greater Boise.

Boise has the elements of a good downtown, including a healthy urban core and grid system, diverse businesses and good natural features, he said. Boise's status as a state capital and a university town helps the downtown, as do strong downtown organizations.

Vacancy rates for retail and office space have been rising in Boise, but vacancy rates in the downtown Boise submarket compare favorably, Davis said.

In tough economic times, protecting downtown should be among priorities for businesses, property owners, policymakers and advocacy groups, he said. This means event promoters must stay active, and that shop spaces should be kept clean and well-lit even if they are vacant.

A downturn also is the time when business operators, landlords and lenders should get creative as needed to make sure the downtown business environment stays healthy, Davis said. Granting some rent relief to a tenant whose revenues are dropping could be more cost-effective than finding a new tenant, depending on the business and location.

Business and policy organizations in Boise continue to explore what is succeeding or failing in other cities – a worthwhile endeavor, he said. Boise, for its next growth cycle, needs to be ready with development and building codes that enable different uses such as retail, residential and office to work together, he added.

Downtown's west side, from 13th to 30th streets south to the Boise River, is "ripe for development," Davis said. Much of the property is idle or is not at its highest and best use, yet the area is close to central downtown and offers good infill development potential, he said. Infill property is attractive in today's market because of its existing infrastructure and its proximity to established markets, he added.

Traffic is one challenge that downtown Boise faces. One-way streets are good for moving vehicles, but two-way streets provide more driver and pedestrian access to shops, he said. Tenth Street is

an example of success in downtown Boise – it has two-way traffic, on-street parking, an anchor retailer and a lineup of local shops that have been developed and sustained naturally, he said.

Despite the sluggish housing market, developers are establishing a good mix of residential projects in Boise's downtown core and around its edge, Davis said.

"There is nothing better for helping retail than residential," he said, citing round-the-clock demand. "That is the single most important component of a healthy downtown from a merchant's standpoint." Retail West and Eastbourne recently completed an office building in Austin, where they have witnessed a growing residential population benefit that city's downtown.

Clark Development on March 12 held a public opening at The Jefferson, a six-story, 43-unit condo project at the southeast corner of Fourth and Jefferson streets in downtown Boise. Company principal Bill Clark said about six unit sales are in hand, and that the number of inquiries increased as the project neared completion and tours could be given.

The economic downturn is "definitely having an effect on the market," said Clark, who owns other downtown-area properties targeted for residential or mixed-use development. But home prices have held up better in downtown and close-in neighborhoods than in many outlying areas, he said. This trend also was evident in downtown Portland, where he visited recently.

"Downtown Boise truly is one of the healthiest downtowns in the West," Clark said. "I encounter many people who are from out of the area who remark about that." They cite good levels of employment, retail offerings and events.

"It's not just a daytime downtown," Clark said. This bodes well for downtown residential developers.

In Portland and Seattle, as the number of downtown residents has increased, so have business and pedestrian activity – driving demand for downtown residences, he said.

Portland's Pearl District, a mixed-use redevelopment area that

has carried a high profile for at least a decade, remains vibrant. Clark said Portland's South Waterfront area, eyed for redevelopment, is "somewhat isolated from downtown, but has some light-rail access. It's a little stark, but probably will change over time."

Downtown Boise likely will expand west of its core and south toward the Boise River, Clark said.

"We already see outposts like the Linen District beginning to take shape, and there is going to be a lot of redevelopment," he said.

The BoDo development south of Boise's downtown core "is a good illustration of more people and more activity generating more," Clark said.

Clark said he's optimistic about downtown Boise, and not just because he is active downtown.

"We're starting from a really strong base of health, with the amount of employment downtown and the variety of existing businesses," he said. "It's going to get better and better."

Chicago-based Baum Development owns most of Block 44, in downtown Boise from Eighth to Ninth streets and from Bannock to Idaho streets.



"Boise is still a great market. We still have interest and we're still working on new deals."

David Baum, developer



PHOTO BY BRAD CARLSON / IBR

Above: Eric Davis of Retail West Properties –
 “I can’t think of a better location in the city
 or a better city in the West to be investing in.”

“Boise is certainly not immune to the macroeconomic world situation that’s affecting everybody,” Baum Development President David Baum said. “We certainly have our challenges. However, Boise is still a great market. We still have interest and we’re still working on new deals.”

Macroeconomic conditions will continue to impact Boise, but “there are lots of great things about Boise that will see it through,” Baum said. A low cost of living and high quality of life “become even more important in these economic times.”

Public transportation is downtown Boise’s top challenge, he said. Further developing public transportation will benefit residential development, and “both of these in turn will help the environmental aspects.” Developing affordable residences downtown will be important, he added.

“Boise doesn’t tout themselves as green, but inherently in a lot of things they do, lifestyle and otherwise, it’s a fairly green city,” Baum said. “They should celebrate that more.”

Downtown Boise is in a good position to grow in a healthy way, if planners are thoughtful about growth, he said. Boise has good fundamentals including a strong business community, the state Capitol, an airport and a university.

“There are a lot of places that just don’t have the fundamentals, and grew because the market grew,” Baum said. “Boise’s got great fundamentals.”

Appraiser and developer Larry Knapp lives on a horse ranch northwest of Star, but he bases L.D. Knapp & Associates in downtown Boise’s four-story McCarty Building, which he owns at the southeast corner of Ninth and Idaho streets.

Every business deal he has struck, regardless of its location, has been initiated in downtown Boise, “and the connection and the synergy of the downtown has been the reason that has happened,” he said. He made most of those initial contacts informally and incidentally, such as when sitting in a coffee shop or walking to a restaurant.

“You can’t afford not to be in the downtown,” Knapp said. Odds are good that key contacts will be made, given that many business and government leaders are based in downtown Boise, he said.



PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR



PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR

Above: Public transportation is downtown Boise's top challenge, according to Chicago-based developer David Baum of Baum Development. Further developing public transportation will benefit residential growth, he said.

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Niche-oriented retailers good fit for downtown

By Brad Carlson
Idaho Business Review



PHOTOS BY BRAD CARLSON & STEVE MARTIN / IBR

American Clothing Gallery has succeeded in the middle of downtown Boise for more than 10 years, in part because owner Lil Kurek won't stock items that local shoppers can buy somewhere else.

The store, situated on the ground floor of Capitol Terrace at Eighth and Main streets, sells women's American western and weekend wear, accessories and gifts.

"We have a lot of one-of-a-kind pieces, a lot of exclusivity in our lines," Kurek said. "I try to stay as exclusive as I can. Sometimes something slips by, but most of the time I'm right on as far as what other stores have."

Successful retailers in downtown Boise are "run well, and have a product that people need and are buying," said appraiser and developer Larry Knapp of L.D. Knapp & Associates, which is based in downtown Boise.

Downtown Boise has plenty of retailers that continue to perform well in the slow economy, even though some operators have tightened their operations, he said. Most are niche-oriented, so "when you're shopping downtown, you expect to find something substantially different than you will find at large retailers."

As more workers and residents occupy downtown Boise, the diversity of specialty shops will increase, Knapp said.

Chicago-based Baum Development owns most of Block 44, in downtown Boise from Eighth to Ninth streets and from Bannock to Idaho streets. Retailers in Baum-owned spaces include nationals The North Face, Chico's and Anthropologie, and the regional See Jane Run. These retailers probably aren't doing as well as they would do in a stronger economy, but they are holding their own, Baum Development President David Baum said.

The retailers that Baum Development has brought to Boise offer something unique, he said. Most don't operate huge numbers of stores.

"We're not looking for someone that has stores in every mall across America," Baum said.

Downtown Boise's retail offering "has to be a good mix. We certainly don't want it to be all nationals," he said. Boise has a good mix of downtown retailers that complement each other – mostly independents, with a few nationals and regionals, he said.

American Clothing Gallery business volume as of mid-March was down a bit from a year earlier but was picking up as the weather improved, Kurek said. The down economy has been a popular topic among customers, "but the consensus is that we all need to do our part to keep the economy stimulated."

She and her husband make a special effort to support downtown businesses, she said.

Kurek, a member of the Downtown Boise Association board, said the number of downtown events and conventions has increased in the past decade or so, benefiting downtown businesses. For example, the Special Olympics World Winter Games in southwest Idaho boosted business for American Clothing Gallery in February, a traditionally low-volume month.

Photo at middle left, opposite page: Lil Kurek, owner and president of American Clothing Gallery Inc. at 100 N. 8th St. in downtown Boise, talks with Tom Veasy of Boise.

CCDC is an independent public redevelopment agency serving as a catalyst for quality private development through urban design, economic development and infrastructure investment with a goal of building vitality in Boise's downtown.



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PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR

Downtown still attractive draw for new tenants

By Dani Grigg

Idaho Business Review

Annie Peterson saw there was a hole in the retail offering in downtown Boise, and despite her lack of retail experience, she jumped on it.

She opened Chic Bridal Boutique in the 8th Street Marketplace in December 2008, and her upscale dress shop has been “very successful” in its three months of existence, she said.

Even when other retailers are struggling, people are still getting married, Peterson said, and a dress is something brides are often willing to splurge on.

The wedding dress shows a bride’s personality, and each dress in her shop is distinctive, she said, adding that “we’re catering to people who want something different.” And with downtown’s collection of

unique shops, the boutique fit right in.

Peterson (shown in her shop on opposite page, top right) sells dresses shipped in from Barcelona, from New York, from Los Angeles.

“People come in and they’re excited, and they’re getting married; it’s really neat,” she said.

Downtown Boise is dotted with new tenants making a go of it with a new business idea or a new space.

In the last year, 23 new businesses have opened up, including everything from a hair salon to a winery to two personal trainers to a bank, according to the Downtown Boise Association, and six more are slated to open this spring.

“The variety is what’s amazing,” said DBA executive director

Kären Sander. "It's a little bit of everything."

A little bit of everything includes some local and some national businesses.

"We're still tracking about 80 percent local, which goes back to finding a really good balance for downtown, and that's what makes us unique," Sander said.

Developer Ephraim Greenwall's 8th Street Marketplace saw two restaurant openings in April, one local and one national.

He's hoping Texas Boogie and Gandolfos, along with the possible addition of a comedy club this summer, will add to the mix of stores that will make the 8th and Broad neighborhood a sustainable commercial area with an emphasis on entertainment.

Texas Boogie, a restaurant and bar featuring Texas décor and dueling pianos, will take over the space most recently occupied by the 8th Street Wine Co.

New Downtown Businesses 2008-2009

(Source: Downtown Boise Association)

- Alterations Master, 1020 W. Main St.
- Anthropologie, 822 W. Idaho St.
- Atomic Treasures, 409 S. 8th St.
- Bonefish Grill, 855 W. Broad St
- Buns in the Oven, 413 S. 8th St.
- Chic Bridal Boutique, 404 S. 8th St.
- Cool Hand Luke's, 622 W. Idaho St.
- Custom Flowers By AG, 401 S. 9th St.
 - DL Evans Bank, 213 N. 9th St.
- Easy Street Market, 745 W. Idaho St.
- Endurance Fitness and Training 1114 W. Jefferson St.
- Floral Boutique of the Owyhees, 1115 W. Main St.
 - The Fixx Coffeehouse, 224 N. 10th St.
- La Cantina Sociale, 707 W. Bannock St.
 - Liquid Lounge 405 S. 8th St.
- Lunatic Fringe Salon, 874 W. Broad St.
 - Maclife, 421 S. 8th St.
- The Modern Man (formerly My Fair Lady), 208 N. 9th St.
 - The North Face, 800 W. Idaho St.
- Snake River Winery, 786 W. Broad St.
 - Title Nine, 170 N. 8th St.
- Your Fitness Your Life Personal Training, 199 N. Capitol Blvd.
 - Gandolfo's Deli, 401 S. 8th St.

Coming soon:

- Bad Irish, 199 N. 8th St.
- Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, 103 N. 10th St.
- HiJinx Comedy Club, N. 8th St.
 - Pink, 274 N. 8th St.
- Texas Boogie Bar & Grill, 405 S. 8th St.
- Willi B's Sandwich Saloon, 225 N. 5th St.

Greenwall said the experience of the management and the cost structure of the business, combined with the traditional popularity of dueling piano bars and the entertainment draw of surrounding businesses, add up to a positive outlook for the restaurant.

"If Texas Boogie gets the same kind of traffic as the predecessor in the same space, they'll be wildly successful," Greenwall said. "If they get half as much traffic, they'll do fine. ... I think we've got A-plus operators with A ideas, and that combination makes me enthusiastic. ... These are tough times so I can't promise anything, but I'm optimistic when we have a combination of strong management and strong business ideas and experience in that business idea."



PHOTO BY DANI GRIGG / IBR



PHOTO BY DANI GRIGG / IBR

Another recent addition to the downtown offering is an import from Broadway Avenue, Flower Boutique of the Owyhees, which features custom arrangements.

"Whatever you want, I'll try to achieve the flowers and the look you asked for," said owner Kathleen Taylor (shown above watering plants). "I don't do cookie-cutter arrangements."

The flower shop, whose employees make nearby deliveries on a purple bicycle, moved to a space inside the Owyhee Hotel on Main Street in October 2008 after 12 years in the ShopKo shopping center. There the store was burglarized three times.

Taylor said the atmosphere downtown is "completely different." "I really like it, because there's always something going on."

First Thursday

20 years & counting

By Gaye Bunderson
Idaho Business Review



PHOTO BY KEN LEVY

Mark your calendars or make a mental note. However you want, remember that if it's very early in a new month and it's not Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday, it must be First Thursday.

That's not just any day on the calendar; it's the day galleries and shops throughout downtown Boise keep their doors open late so people can drop in, browse or buy, and just enjoy the opportunity to be out and about the core of their beloved community.

The idea that launched what is now First Thursday was hatched two decades ago when a group of gallery owners got together with the idea of promoting art and culture while bringing patrons into their businesses.

One of the co-founding members, Basement Gallery owner Perry Allen, said they got the idea from similar events in Seattle and Portland and thought it could work in Boise. He and a few other downtown gallery owners launched The Gallery Stroll, the precursor to First Thursday.

It was, in many ways, a matter of economic survival for the

downtown area of Idaho's capital city.

"The downtown sector was crippled," he said. "The mall was pulling people away. ... We (downtown business owners) were the ones hurting; and we knew if we didn't come up with a plan, we were going to blow away."

But to say it was strictly a matter of money would be highly inaccurate. "We wanted to improve upon culture in our town," Allen said.

It was initially "an experiment, real grassroots," complete with homemade posters, he said. The fare was excellent: galleries served catered food and wine, borrowing once again from the concept in larger cities.

Eventually, the Downtown Boise Association took over the event, renamed it and opened it up to all downtown businesses, not just galleries. Current DBA Executive Director Karen Sander said the organization will mark the 20th anniversary of First Thursday, as crowds currently know it, this year.

"First Thursday, along with downtown Boise, has evolved over

time,” said Sander. “From a Gallery Stroll to late night retail, music events and art in nontraditional settings, it has become a social gathering for the community.”

Galleries are as involved as ever – as is the Boise Art Museum. Gloria Brown, owner of Browns Gallery, one of the original establishments along with Basement Gallery, Gallery 601 and RG Grey Jewelry Gallery, said that with the exception of stormy winter days the faithful just keep coming.

“Three hundred people is a small crowd for us. We get 300 to 500,” Brown said.

She feels the most positive aspect of First Thursday is that it brings people inside stores. “Other activities in the downtown area bring people downtown but not inside the businesses,” she said.

Merchants who participate say it's good for them. “Is it lucrative? Absolutely. I wouldn't do it if it wasn't,” said Lil Kurek, owner of American Clothing Gallery at 100 N. Eighth Street. “I've been doing it for 10 1/2 years. It hasn't changed; it's consistent.”

Kellee Sharples, owner of Buns in the Oven at 413 S. Eighth Street, agreed, saying, “I think it's a great idea and people need the opportunity to see the stores open late.”

The flow of free wine that used to be available was cut off by officials a couple of years back, but most merchants don't feel that has hurt First Thursday over the long-

term. And some merchants, such as Brown, use caterers to provide the libation. “It affected the event at first. ... We're working with Sawtooth Winery, and that's been very good. We always try to have live music, too,” she said.

Allen, who said he has sometimes felt First Thursday veered from the founders' original intent, still finds it a positive experience.

“I always get wall-to-wall people,” he said. “I've never had a bad First Thursday.”



PHOTO BY KEN LEVY

Above: Boise mixed-media artist Marianne Konvalinka of the Gypsy Gallery shows her work at the Pioneer Building at Sixth and Main streets during First Thursday in March. **Opposite page:** Visitors to the Basement Gallery at 10th and Main streets check out original art.

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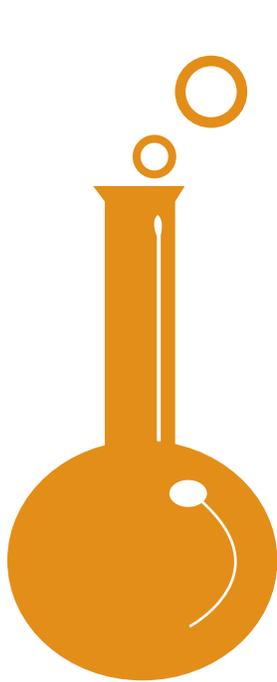
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Downtown formula 4 success:

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By Ken Levy
Special to the IBR

Much of the ideal future direction of downtown Boise lies in making the best of its past. Many who live, work and play downtown say preserving its old buildings, while making them sustainable and environmentally friendly, is central to enhancing the area's uniqueness and character.

Shopping and spending locally, boosting public transportation use and continuing popular activities round out a formula for a positive future for the area and its identity, they say.

Alan Giltzow, who lived in Boise for more than 60 years, watched that identity develop and evolve, from the "big mistake" of tearing down many of downtown's old buildings in the 1960s to ongoing revitalization efforts.

Many of those older buildings remain, however, and several advocates of downtown's unique image want them preserved and enhanced.

Giltzow's daughter, Jeanne, wants to see the old buildings preserved as much as possible.

"Some people are looking at 'out with the old, in with the new,'" she said. "If we don't preserve the old, we won't have any history to show."

She knows a bit about that history, having grown up with her family downtown in a turn-of-the-century home. She now lives in a studio apartment in the historic Idanha Hotel at 10th and Main streets.



PHOTO BY KEN LEVY

Downtown restaurateur Dave Krick wants to see the area's "wonderful collection of old buildings" get green.

"As a city and as downtown, our focus should be on our buildings and our infrastructure," he said. Incentives should be developed for owners to remodel them from the inside out for energy efficiency and better productivity.

Krick is a leading proponent of making downtown sustainable and environmentally friendly, which he said will help the area move forward in a positive direction.

"What we have down here is a community, and sustainability should be at the top of our priority list," he said.

Sustainability focuses on "where we get stuff from," said Krick, as well as minimizing waste and energy use.

A longtime proponent of shopping and buying locally, Krick, who operates the Bittercreek Ale House and Red Feather Lounge on Eighth Street, said building a more robust localized economy is critical to downtown's future.

"I have no problem with businesses not locally owned," he said, "but our focus needs to be on building local capacity and local self-sufficiency and encouraging our businesses to support locally owned supply chains."

Krick would also like to see much more public transportation use and minimal automobile traffic downtown. An avid bike rider, he doesn't own an automobile.

He supports the proposed multimodal transportation center, including a streetcar that would travel throughout downtown.

"It should reach out to our major campuses, including St. Luke's and Boise State University, and our major residential areas of the East End and the North End. That's where the majority of the people who actively use the downtown come from," he said.

Those who live downtown find nearly everything they need close by, according to Jeanne Giltzow (shown on opposite page at bottom left). She works about a block away from home, and her Idanha living room doubles as a photo studio.

"I love how everything is so compact, and you don't need to get in your car to go anywhere. If you need to do anything, it's all in a couple-of-block radius. But a convenience store or little grocery store would be nice," she said.

Giltzow said she really enjoys what the community is doing for the arts.

"I think it works better to have the arts downtown, especially around the historical buildings," she said. "When you have a more artistic architecture, you're already in that mindset."

Her father Alan agreed.

"Downtown's revitalization in the past 10 years has really been great, with all the galleries, First Thursday, Alive after Five and Saturday Farmer's Markets," he said.

As president of the board for Art Source Gallery, Alan Giltzow said he'd appreciate improvements in mass transit and parking availability, but cited "the positive attitude shown by the merchants down here" as a key draw, and said he'd like to see even more cultural opportunities downtown.

Painter and ceramic artist Janet Courter, who said she frequents downtown for its arts and restaurant scene, agreed. She'd also appreciate more downtown event opportunities made available on Sundays, such as expanding the farmer's markets.

Although she finds some shopping downtown "a little spendy,"

she does enjoy the offerings at Macy's and Dragonfly, and is exploring the opportunities in BoDo.

The downtown experience could be enhanced by additional public transportation opportunities, Courter suggested, with more frequent bus runs and trolleys. Courter said downtown parking can be awkward, and she's saved a few downtown visitors from parking tickets by punching the blue "free" button on their expired parking meters.

Photographer and writer Ken Levy is based in the Treasure Valley. Contact him at ken@kenlevymedia.com.



PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR

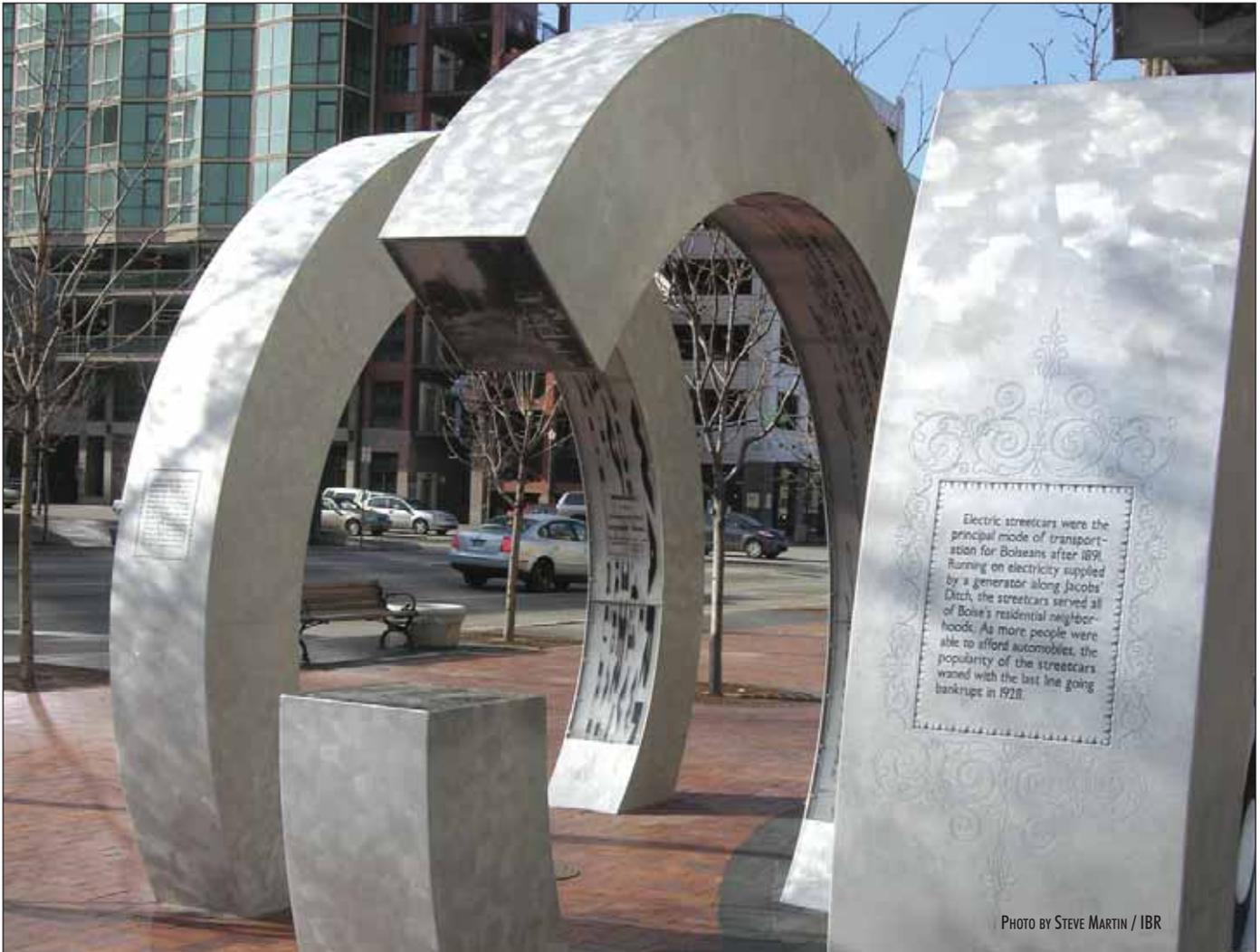


PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR

Dynamic destination

Boise's creative economy keeps visitors coming downtown

By Karen Bubb

Boise Department of Arts & History

Boise's creative economy is fueled by individuals and organizations that produce cultural goods and services in which the public invests – original artwork found at the Capital City Public Market, a play at Fulton Street Center for the Arts, or an opera at the Egyptian, for example.

Entrepreneurs who innovate are also part of Boise's creative class of professionals. They can be found in places where creative businesses cluster such as the Linen District, BoDo, and in Boise's downtown core. The synergistic combination of these cultural producers and business innovators contributes to making Boise a dynamic city where people want to live and work.

Arts and cultural activities continue to be primary reasons that people spend time and money in downtown Boise. Hundreds of

residents and visitors stroll through galleries on First Thursday and attend events like Alive After Five on the Grove or Modern Art at the Modern Hotel (coming up on May 7).

Boise also attracts creative professionals – as evidenced by the recent relocation of Trey McIntyre Project, an international dance company that moved staff and dancers to Boise and founded an office and dance studio in the downtown cultural district at Eighth and Fulton streets. They want to be in a place that values culture, nature, and community and have quickly become active participants in the local scene. The new Ballet Idaho also imported a company of fresh dancers and provided the community with an impressive inaugural series of performances directed by artistic director Peter Anastos.

In March, Boise's Department of Arts and History (A & H) celebrated its first-year anniversary as a department and its 30-year anniversary as a cultural organization. These milestones were experienced under new leadership with the mayor's appointment of Terri Schorzman as director. Amy Fackler is the new cultural programs manager; she organizes performing arts events and other city initiatives like Fall for Boise.

The department also launched an e-newsletter, *Headlines*, to keep you apprised of activities, events, calls for artists, and more. To receive *Headlines* contact us at experienceboise@cityof-boise.org. You can also find alerts to cultural activities on the department's Facebook page.

History-based programs attracted many to downtown this past year. The Fettucine Forum at the Rose Room featured local and national speakers on topics such as the presidential election, transportation and affordable housing, and women's history. Record attendance at these events brought many people to downtown.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DOWNTOWN BOISE ASSOCIATION

The national StoryCorps recording studio parked on City Hall Plaza last May and June, documenting life stories of citizens. Boise State University's Public Radio aired many of the local conversations. Staff conducted several Arts and History Tours for school and civic groups. A & H released a podcast featuring artist Mark Baltes' *Did you Know?* public artwork that tells the history of sites along Capitol Boulevard. A recently published brochure features over 80 public artworks and also showcases several historic downtown buildings. It is available in kiosks at Eight and Idaho, as well as Eight and Broad streets.

Government and private business forged a creative partnership in January with the kick-off of 8th Street Marketplace's Artist in Residence (AiR) program. Owner Ephriam Greenwall opened up three office suites for artist studios and A & H facilitated artist selection. Forty-six artists of various disciplines submitted applications to participate, demonstrating the wealth of creative activity in the Treasure Valley. AiR's open studio events on First Thursday brought many people through the newly renovated building and provided great exposure to a new theater company, visual artists, and poet in residence. The next round of artists will take up residence in May.

Above: Art patrons enjoy a gallery stroll during First Thursday in downtown Boise.

At left & opposite page: Public art contributes to the cultural growth of the city.

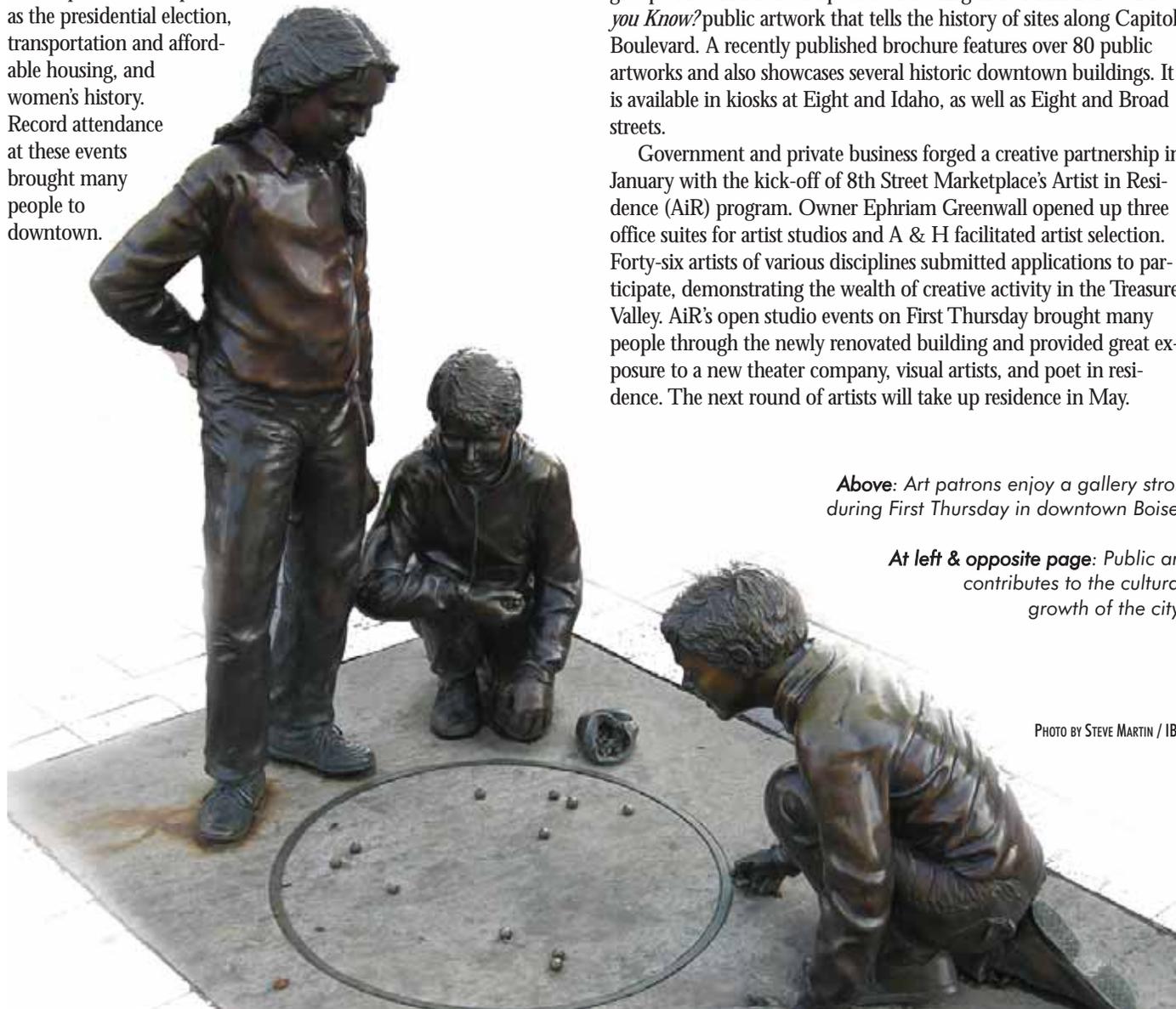


PHOTO BY STEVE MARTIN / IBR

APRIL 2009

Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC) continues to support performing and visual arts as part of its downtown economic development strategy, funding performing artists at the Capital City Public Market and events like City Harvest and Collaborations on the Grove. CCDC also supports the changing murals on Main and Eighth streets, which celebrated the inaugural year of Idaho Green Expo, the opening of Boise WaterShed and, most recently, athletes who participated in the World Special Olympics. New murals will go up in May by Ward Hooper and local youth featuring the "Be Outside" theme.

In the coming year, look for art on traffic control boxes on downtown street corners; the Downtown Boise Association received a Mayor's Neighborhood Reinvestment Grant to adorn five and is working with A & H to select artists.

The creative economy will continue to play a significant role in the health of Boise's downtown with upcoming initiatives such as the Linen Market in the Linen Building on Grove Street, set to feature local artisans every third Sunday. Attending events and investing in local arts and culture is what individuals, business and government can do to keep Boise the most livable city in the country.

Karen Bubb is the public arts manager for the Boise Department of Arts & History.



Below: The Egyptian Theatre in downtown Boise hosts a number of entertainment events, including movies, concerts and operas.



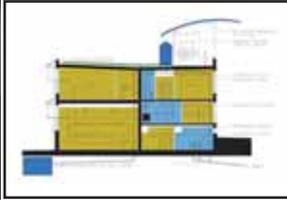
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