

# Executive Summary



Where Meridian Lives

**Destination:** *Downtown*

# What is Destination:Downtown?

**Destination: Downtown** is a Vision Plan for the long-term future of downtown Meridian. The City of Meridian's slogan, "Built for Business - Designed for Living," embodies the community's character as a sophisticated, family-friendly city in the heart of the Treasure Valley. The downtown Vision reinforces this mind-set and helps to achieve it.

To this end the Vision promotes the following:

- A pedestrian friendly environment
- Downtown as a destination and convergence point
- Transit services and multiple transportation modes
- Mixed commercial activity
- Beautification and public art
- Diverse housing supply
- Availability of parking options
- Balanced retail environment, and
- Integration and protection of existing businesses

This Vision is the result of a focused community outreach process and the ideas and input of several dozen dedicated citizen volunteers. It was the primary goal of this process to produce a visioning document that was essentially crafted by the community, and one that will ultimately be implemented by the community.

Destination: Downtown is a visioning document that is intended to be a guide to decision-makers, but is not policy. The Vision document, and the images and

language described in it, are intended to paint a picture of the possibilities for downtown. The actual implementation of the vision will likely differ significantly. Specific projects and developments will occur as opportunities arise and within a free-market environment. Thus, the Vision document should be referred to, regularly, to ensure development is consistent with the spirit and intent of this Vision.

## Process

*Destination: Downtown* was developed through a collaborative effort spearheaded by the Meridian Development Corporation (MDC). Nearly three dozen Stakeholders were identified within the community and worked with the consulting team throughout the process, and several members of the general public provided input throughout the process as well. The Visioning process, took about eight months to complete.

### Stakeholder Workshops

Six Stakeholder workshops were held to craft the vision and solicit feedback on draft plan elements. Each of these meetings were focused on specific aspects of the Plan, such as: model places & focus areas, parking, marketing strategies, downtown districts, projects & big ideas, and implementation.

### Public Meetings

Three public open houses, and three public question and answer sessions, were held to provide opportunities for broad community input and discussion at key points along the process.

### Charrette

A four-day design charrette brought together the MDC, the City, the consulting team, stakeholders, and citizens together to develop the main components of the Vision, to generate ideas, and begin to develop a framework for a new downtown image.

### Website and E-Newsletters

Destination-Downtown.org, an interactive website for the project, offered opportunities for the public to follow the process and contribute to it at their own pace. Regular email newsletter updates announced project milestones and key community involvement opportunities. The website's blog and forum features allowed the community to post photos, comments, and other discussion topics for consideration and inclusion in the Vision discussions.



Stakeholder Meeting

## Deliverables

The final product of the Destination:Downtown is a four-part deliverable:

- The Vision
- Implementing the Vision
- Parking Analysis
- Market Analysis



### The Vision

The Vision is a graphic illustration of the community's vision for downtown to generate support, excitement and interest in downtown. It visually illustrates the community vision and a range of possible opportunities and concepts for downtown.

### Implementing the Vision

Implementing the Vision for downtown will require a strategic plan of action. This document is intended to be a working document and a guide for decision-makers. It contains a list of 33 individual projects identified by the Meridian Stakeholders to implement the Vision.

Each project describes the name of the project, its objectives, likely stakeholders, and participants. The Meridian stakeholders assigned a timeline and priority to each project, and helped brainstorm a series of specific implementation action items for each.

### Market Analysis

A background document to the Vision is the market analysis. It provides background information and specific recommendations for targeting specific economic development strategies and opportunities for Meridian's downtown.

### Parking Analysis

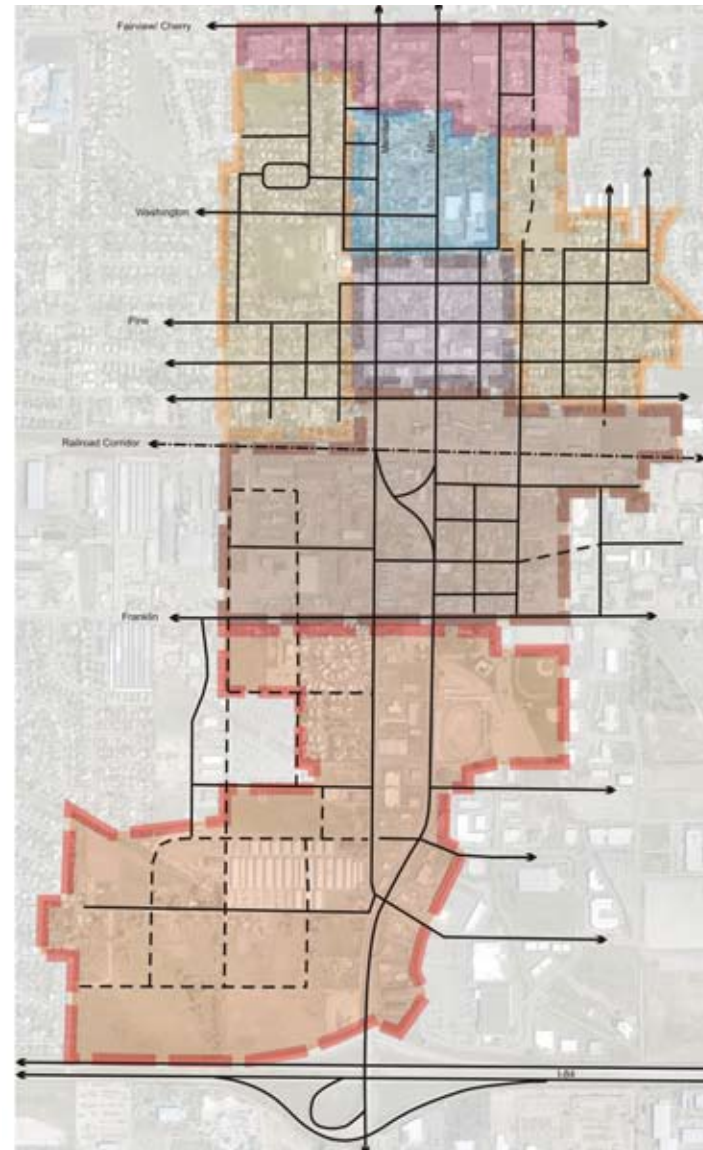
The Parking Analysis provides a background study on parking conditions in the downtown. It also provides a summary of existing parking conditions, an overview of different parking management strategies, and specific recommendations and projections for meeting Meridian's future downtown parking demands.



# Key Components & Recommendations

The Destination:Downtown Vision is comprised of a number of key components. These include specific elements and focus areas, general recommendations as well as project-specific actions, and a series of specific districts.

## Districts



- Northern Gateway District
- Traditional City Core
- Neighborhood Preservation
- TOD/ Cultural District
- Washington & Main District
- Southern Gateway Entertainment & Hospitality District

Six character districts are envisioned within the MDC boundary. These districts were defined based on current land use conditions and best possibilities for future development.

**Northern Gateway District:** Key character features include taller buildings, streetscape improvements, streetscape improvements, larger retail and employment uses. The intent is for this district to create a sense of entry or gateway to downtown, and to draw people onto Main Street.

**Neighborhood Preservation Areas:** These are existing neighborhoods within the MDC boundary that will be preserved. The intent within this district is to promote residential preservation, provide open space and park opportunities, and assign historic designation to deserving structures.

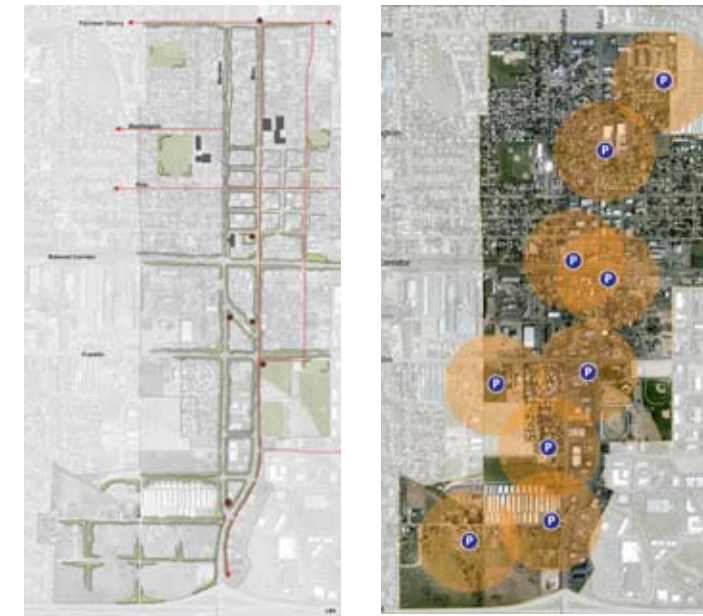
**Washington & Main District:** This district will be characterized by small scale buildings, small scale streetscape and ample setbacks. The district will build on existing uses and increase the presence of small and locally owned businesses and specialty retail on Main Street.

**Traditional City Core:** The district will build on the history of Meridian and will be characterized by 2 - 4 story infill and restoration, traditional architecture themes, a continuous urban edge, vertical and horizontal integration of uses, civic uses and live/ work opportunities. The intent is also to promote walkability and activity.

**TOD/ Cultural District:** This district will be characterized by integrated existing businesses, art & cultural opportunities, civic/ TOD opportunities, event/ performance space, and dense development. It will serve as a complement to the traditional core and introduce contemporary architectural themes.

**Southern Gateway Entertainment & Hospitality District:** This district will introduce bike paths & trails, hotel/ upscale restaurant uses, and include an expanded/ upgraded speedway and parks. Landscaping will be improved, and a multi-purpose sports facility will also be located in the district. Prominent gateway features will also be located in this district. The intent will be to create a southern draw into the downtown

## Vision Framework



Green Space

Parking

Destination: Downtown explores downtown Meridian in layers and identifies existing systems within the downtown area. The Vision identifies specific strategies for building on existing assets and ensuring efficient and effective extensions of those systems. Specific recommendations are provided for green space, vehicular movement, walkability and transit systems, and parking opportunities.

### Green Space:

- Turn Meridian Road into a boulevard with a landscaped median
- Preserve existing open spaces
- Explore options for a baseball park or sporting events venue within the downtown area
- Extend the existing multiple-use path into downtown
- Identify new bike routes through downtown
- Increase landscaping throughout downtown

### Road Network:

- Extend the existing street grid in areas where the grid breaks down.
- Connect 3rd Street to Cherry Lane
- Work with developers to set aside all new road right-of-way

### Transit:

- Locate a transit hub within downtown
- Connect hub to current transit service with bus loop
- Preserve options for future rail service, and orient new development towards the rail

### Green Space:

- Transition the City Core on-street parking to paid parking
- Do not charge for parking in any other districts, unless future demand necessitates it
- Transition existing parallel to angled parking, where feasible, to maximize parking downtown
- Acquire land for future surface and structured parking

## Focus Areas

The Vision establishes four focus areas for developing the downtown. These serve as major goals through which the Vision will be realized. They are Livability, Mobility, Prosperity, and Sustainability.

### Livability



Downtown Meridian will be a destination where there is a wide variety of entertainment and social options to serve the downtown and area residents. It will have a strong character, a welcoming and beautiful atmosphere, and a variety of housing options that can be easily accessible by car as well as other transit options. The downtown will also be connected to the rest of the City by a greenbelt or pathway system. The focus areas will be, public art and beautification, entertainment and gathering places and downtown housing.

Priority Actions include:

- More community gathering places
- A long-term lease for the Union Pacific property
- A stadium or sports facility in downtown, and
- A promotion of local history and heritage

# Implementation Framework

## Mobility



Downtown Meridian will have a system of connectivity that supports and enhances both motorized and non-motorized, safe, pedestrian movement. A centrally located multi-modal port will be identified to connect the Meridian Central Business District to the greater Treasure Valley and its suburbs. Adequate parking will be provided for at critical ports, stations etc., to create and attract healthy, vibrant businesses and sustain a cultural community. Mobility will focus on creating a pedestrian/ bicycle friendly and transit supportive environment and the creation of a transportation destination.

Priority Actions include:

- Improved walkability
- Multi-modal transit hub
- Developed signage & way-finding infrastructure
- Improved bikeability, and
- Efficient vehicular circulation

## Prosperity



Downtown Meridian will be an economic magnet attracting many different types of businesses to serve its residents and visitors. Most businesses will be small, independent and locally-owned, providing unique products and specialty services. The economic environment will be diverse with mixed uses, private/public partnerships, and opportunities for the integration of upscale businesses into the local fabric. Fair and equitable practices and policies will be utilized to minimize adverse impacts associated with the relocation, or dislocation, of existing businesses and services. The focus areas will be on job creation, the creation of a balanced retail environment, and the integration of existing businesses.

Priority Actions include:

- Integrating existing businesses
- Fostering social retailing
- Developing a catalyst project on 3rd Street & Broadway, and
- Improving the diversity of business activity

## Sustainability



The existing fabric of the downtown core will be preserved and enhanced through responsible low impact development policies. Due diligence will be used in the master planning and development process to utilize and appropriately integrate existing infrastructure without over-burdening them. Strategies will be put in place to ensure that new developments and redevelopment projects are built to last, and are environmentally and economically sustainable. Focus areas will be economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Priority Actions include:

- Expanding the number of cultural events
- Developing a greenbelt pathway network
- Preserving and protecting private property rights
- Promoting innovative development, and
- Providing incentives for sustainable development

The Visioning and Strategic Plan process has been designed to be a very collaborative one that results in a **community-authored** and **community-implemented** plan.

Implementation of the *Destination: Downtown* Vision will require the participation of the City, the MDC, and the Meridian community. The City and the Meridian Development Corporation do not have the resources or man power needed to implement every project in the *Destination: Downtown* Strategic Plan, but both agencies will take a major role in the implementation of this Vision. However, in order for the plan to maximize its effectiveness and generate enthusiasm for the improvement and reinvestment in downtown, it needs the support of the community. The implementation framework for the Vision will be structured as illustrated in the diagram below:



The roles of the different actors in the implementation framework are outlined below:

**Implementation Committee:** The Implementation Committee will consist of the entire MDC Board, City Department Heads, and key Community Organizers. An MDC administrator will be the Committee's staff member.

The Implementation Committee's role will be to:

- Track progress of Action Groups and overall Plan
- Recruit Project Champions
- Serve Action Group Chairs (Prosperity, Livability, etc.)
- Determine project priorities, and implementation goals
- Help facilitate coordination between City and MDC for projects
- Help facilitate the identification of funding sources for specific projects, as appropriate

**Action Groups:** The Action Groups will consist of MDC Board Liasons, and Specific Project Champions. This group will also have an MDC administrator as a member of staff. The Group's role will be as follows:

- Track and manage implementation tasks of Action Group (e.g. Livability)
- Help recruit project Champion
- Help Champions organize specific project implementation teams
- Encourage and remind Project Champions as needed
- Track specific project implementation progress

**Action Champions:** The implementation of the Strategic Plan element of this vision will center on committing, coordinating, and afterward acknowledging the work of a cadre of "Champions" who will marshal the resources needed for each strategy or project.

The Action Champions will have the following roles:

- Recruit project implementation team-members (stakeholders and volunteers)
- Responsible for the initiation, progress, and tracking of specific projects
- Coordinate with Action Groups and the Implementation Committee to find funding sources and necessary support from City, MDC, or other entities.

## Implementation tools

The Meridian community will need to draw from a wide range of sources in order to address the range of goals, projects, strategies and actions. The Vision can explore the following funding sources to carry out its goals:

- Other governmental agencies
- Federal and State grants
- New private development
- Tax Increment Financing
- Donors
- Foundations
- Special Service Districts and Local Improvement Districts
- City General Fund and Capital Improvement Fund revenues
- City Enterprise Funds
- User Fees