



To: Meridian City Council

Re: MDC Destination: Downtown-Design Standards

Dear Councilmembers,

Included in this packet are the Old Town chapter of *Destination: Downtown* and the appendix with the corresponding design standards. The standards are a key element for helping fulfill the vision set forth in the plan. The standards only apply to the Old Town portion of downtown Meridian, with a greater focus on the Traditional City Core I and modest suggestions for the rail corridor and the Traditional City Core II. The standards are intended to guide elements, including:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| -Building heights, | -Off street parking considerations, |
| -Facade treatments/style, | -Allowed land uses, |
| -Building orientation, | -Pedestrian treatments. |
| -Public spaces, | |

Important to note is that the plan is the vision and the standards are the instructions. Without the standards, there is less certainty that development will take the shape of the vision and instead reflect a different vision, not shared by the many people, leaders, and participants throughout the *Destination: Downtown* planning process.

Desired Council Input

There are actions needed by the Meridian City Council that will advance *Destination: Downtown* and codify the design standards. Given the city is the implementing agency for downtown development applications such as rezones, conditional uses, variances, and other actions, the design standards need to be supported and the zoning code updated to reflect the standards. Questions to consider:

1. Is the described land use vision for Old Town largely supported by Council?
 - a. If so, do the standards as written implement the envisioned plans for Old Town?
 - b. Are the standards as currently drafted appropriate for formal adoption into zoning code changes?
2. Is the land use vision for Old Town missing elements?
 - a. If not, what minor adjustments does Council suggest?
 - b. Are there suggested minor modifications to the design standards that should be made that do not significantly alter the vision for Old Town?

Background

Prior to the creation of the scope of work for *Destination: Downtown*, the design standard task was determined to be a key deliverable. At the request of the city, the final plan was to include the corresponding design standards. The standards were, and are, intended to develop a framework that ensures the look, feel, and use of downtown projects have a consistency, while maintaining a degree of creativity and flexibility for property owners. The standards were also meant to prevent buildings and uses contradictory to the vision of downtown and to align with the plans and perspectives of the city.

At the conclusion of the draft plan stage, the plan document, including the design standards, were submitted to staff for comments and reaction. Virtually every comment, edit, or suggested revision were made and reflected in the draft submitted for this work session. To summarize, the standards in the plan came at the request of the city, drafted to support the vision of the plan, and reviewed and edited after comments were received from city staff.



Above: Illustrative rendering of railroad corridor included in *Destination: Downtown*

The Vision

The Old Town vision was crafted by numerous inputs including significant public comment, stakeholder interviews, regional and city plan and policy reviews, and downtown development approaches derived from national best practice. The vision starts with the railroad corridor and works outward to the downtown boundary edges in all cardinal directions. Given the use and centrality of the railroad corridor, it is best suited for the highest and best use of space and density, particularly given its industrial look and the desired recreational and commute pathways. Up to 8-story buildings (100') should align the railroad parcels to frame the corridor and allow modern densities in the heart of town. The next band of space would step down in height and transition from the rail corridor both north and south. This allows slightly less, but still modest densities while maintaining and respecting the existing context of Old Town. The environment is envisioned to be high energy, full of captivating features that appeal to people. The features range from enhanced lighting, unique placemaking concepts, mixtures of appropriate downtown uses, and a landscape that promotes more pedestrian activity either for downtown residents, or visitors, who can park once and take in all that Old Town has to offer.

In the established neighborhood enhancement areas, much of the neighborhoods are envisioned to be preserved, though allowed to grow through modest infill densities, accessory dwelling units, and similar scale development. Otherwise, improving the pedestrian environment, providing a sense of identity and pride through signage, potential mini-traffic circles, and landscape improvements, comprise the bulk of suggested improvements.

For the Traditional City Core II, south of the railroad corridor, a continuation of the environment found in the TCC I is in the plan. This means up to 75' buildings of 4-5 stories, the promotion of "Human Experience" treatments (described within Destination: Downtown), and improvements to the parking and pedestrian realms. There are major possibilities in the TTC II if larger property owners decide to relocate or sell their parcels. For the downtown to truly begin towards the I-84 exits, a steady march of true downtown like development projects should follow. This plan and the corresponding design standards intent to do just that, and be a modern extension of Old Town and its many appealing locations and features.

Below: Excerpt neighborhood guidelines and Old Town Sectors map from *Destination: Downtown* of the Old Town subareas.

Neighborhood Enhancement Priorities

Redevelopment

Protect the existing neighborhood areas with policies that limit building heights and ensure consistency with existing setbacks.

Adopt policies that allow for Accessory Dwelling Units and live/work/create properties, as well as small-scale neighborhood commercial uses.

Transportation

Establish residential permit parking with restrictions on non-residential parking, as indicated in the parking analysis.

Upgrade intersections to include neighborhood traffic circles, starting with streets residents identify as problematic from a speed and cut-through traffic standpoint.

Upgrade crossings of Meridian Road to reduce barrier effect for neighborhoods to the west.

Parks & Open Space

Ensure existing neighborhood needs are integrated into new parks and open space developed within the TCC 1, TCC 2, and Railroad Corridor. Determine where pocket parks may be appropriate on vacant or underutilized lots within existing neighborhoods.





Old Town



Old Town Meridian should once again serve as the heartbeat of the city. To do so, it must continue to evolve into a city core that reflects that of a city of more than 140,000 people.

While there are various perspectives on what truly encompasses Old Town, for purposes of this plan it is defined as Franklin Road to Carlton Avenue, including most of the land between Southwest 4th Street west of Meridian Road to Northeast 5th Street to the east of Main Street.

This planning area is divided into four zones for this plan (map on next page):

- **Traditional City Core 1**, north of the railroad tracks from Meridian Road to East 3rd Street.
- **Traditional City Core 2**, south of the railroad tracks to from 1/4-mile west of Meridian Road to East 3rd Street.
- **Railroad Corridor**, consisting of the strip of properties adjacent to the north and south side of the tracks from 1/4-mile west of Meridian Road to Northeast 6th Street.
- **Neighborhood Enhancement**, including neighborhoods north of Broadway Avenue, west of Meridian Road and east of East 3rd Street.

Overall Old Town Priorities

Redevelopment

Respect Meridian's history while promoting a modern downtown. Continue to increase the number of businesses and residential units in Old Town. Maximize opportunities that come with mitigation of the **Nine Mile Floodplain**.

Amplify downtown's role as a go-to rather than a go-through destination with a mix of commercial and event-based uses. Update policies to promote vertical development with appropriate downtown architecture themes.

Transportation

Create a pedestrian-rich environment through street improvements, building design, speed management, and improved access. Manage parking by increasing utilization through scaled enforcement, then investments in parking facilities.

Parks & Open Space

Seek opportunities to expand public parks and open space through: Pocket parks within larger downtown development, development of the rail corridor as a green space, with a pathway and transit-ready land uses.



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



Overall, the four zones within Old Town are envisioned to include a variety of downtown-oriented uses. This means a dense, mixed use land pattern, robust pedestrian environment, and a strong mixture of residential units, commercial enterprises, office settings, and gathering places with year-round appeal.

While the Traditional City Core 2 area is not designated in past city and MDC planning efforts, the street grid and characteristics of these properties, both currently and in likely redevelopment, suggest it has many similarities to the boundaries contained in Traditional City Core 1.

This collection of development types, combined with improving existing street conditions in the Neighborhood Enhancement areas, can help realize the vision for what is largely the city's original town site.

Land Use & Design Strategies

Conceptually, the Traditional City Core 1 & 2, as well as the railroad corridor should grow in with more dense land use patterns. Increased building heights should be promoted along the railroad corridor with buildings around the Idaho Avenue blocks of Old Town reflecting the traditional two-story scale of the street.

Ground floors and the balance of the buildings should be viewed as two separate spaces. The

ground floors of future buildings need to captivate the public, be welcoming and inviting, and give an energy to pedestrians, potential customers, and downtown residents.

This can be achieved by including different uses that offer more commercial enterprises, or through design features like expansive windows and highly captivating internal design features typical of downtown. What cannot occur are spaces with little to no appeal to passers by, such as first floor offices like legal services, accountants, real estate, and insurance.

With regards to the building uses above the first floor, residential, professional office or individual office suites, education or extension services, and similar types of uses are preferred. Such uses give downtown something it hasn't had consistently for generations—a significant customer base. While recent years have most certainly seen sizable increases in customer appeal, bringing more people into vertical spaces either during work hours or as residents, will dramatically increase the viability of business pursuits on the ground floors and translate into even more success



Meridian's Heartbeat

when the city or Chamber of Commerce put on festivals, events, or related gatherings.

Beyond the building scale and uses, spaces in downtown must appeal to people on foot. Café street side dining, sitting areas, shade, lighting, music, and more, are precisely what downtown needs more of to attract people.

Old Town is competing with other places, including The Village, newer planned development spaces, and other downtowns. For Old Town to succeed, it simply must offer similar features and likely even more.

Fortunately, some building elements are achieved through private endeavors assuming code permits, others may require public investment of modest levels, and for a select few, more significant investments should be made but can be done so through private-public partnerships.

Catalyst Properties

The large parcels developed within the Old Town area during the past decade are part of what prompted the *Destination: Downtown Update*. With the lots where City Hall, Old Town Lofts, and the Union 93 are complete or under construction, the next set of catalyst properties are situated primarily within the Railroad Corridor, east of 3rd Street and south of the railroad tracks.

Within Traditional City Core 1 are properties where the Heritage School sits, along with the blocks confined by Pine and Broadway, between East 2nd and East 3rd Streets. Properties within Traditional City Core 2 are located primarily within the Nine Mile Floodplain. Industrial Properties are also key to realizing redevelopment goals for this area.

Mobility & Access

Perhaps the most significant conflict in realizing a more pedestrian friendly downtown is the current orientation of Meridian Road and Main Street arterials. A quick comparison of other large cities with similar arterial configuration in the Treasure Valley shows that Meridian is more similar to Nampa, while

Old Town



Caldwell and Boise are more alike. Meridian and Nampa share a characteristics of major arterials bifurcating their downtown, whereas Boise and Caldwell have major arterials that are more offset from the bulk of downtown properties.

Such conditions are not insurmountable for Meridian, but make developing pedestrian-rich environments more challenging given an uncomfortable environment like a major road to walk or bike along, or cross.

The barrier effect of these arterials is real but there are ways to improve them while maintaining the desired traffic flows. On the transportation side this includes placing a greater safety emphasis on east/west crossings



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



of the Main/Meridian arterials and reducing vehicle travel speeds using the following techniques:

- Revised traffic signal control plans;
- Reduced travel lane widths;
- Raised intersections & crosswalks;
- Curb extensions;
- Refuge islands & landscaped medians;
- Pedestrian scrambles; and
- Roundabouts or traffic circles.

ACHD identified potential treatments to improve conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians in the downtown area. The Playbook section for the *Destination: Downtown Update* provides even more focused improvements to build on ACHD's findings.

Many of the downtown streets, east of Meridian Road, are tailor-made for various improvements while Meridian Road is a major barrier. This barrier effect could be reduced by adding landscaped medians in pockets where there are few or no turning conflicts or where ACHD desires to control access to and/or from side streets. At this time there are no plans to reconstruct Meridian Road to include a shared use pathway between Franklin and Cherry, but that may be a future option if large-scale redevelopment occurs along the route.

A transportation- and economic-related strategy for Old Town is the creation of a

festival street along East 2nd Street. Festival Streets are unique in design and serve residents, visitors, and patrons of events, with motorists treated as guests to the street. The section from Broadway to Pine is already planned for this treatment. A second phase is recommended north of Pine to Carlton given this section serves no real function in the motor vehicle networks.

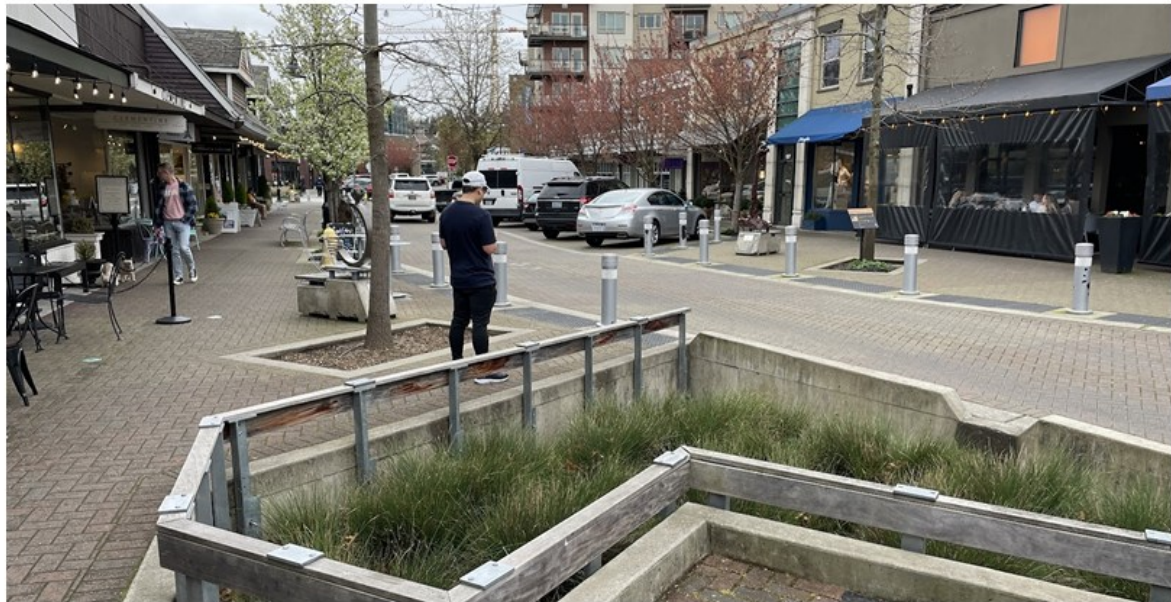
Elements of a festival street include:

- Pedestrian movement at all points;
- Flexible design for temporary closures;
- Street furniture, trees & planter boxes;
- Public art & performance areas; and
- Overhead & streetside lighting.

A sample design that is similar to Meridian's context is Park Lane in Kirkland, WA. It is two blocks in length with images below and at right.



Park Lane in Kirkland, WA, (pictured above and below) has many features that are worth considering in the design of 2nd Street as a Festival Street. It is recommended that such a treatment be applied from Broadway Avenue to Carlton Avenue.



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



Policy Changes & Investments to Consider

Traditional City Core 1 & 2

- Maximum building height of 75' or 5 stories.
- Allow one-time expansion of existing property for non-conforming structures.
- Prohibit off-street surface parking on street frontage (not alleys).
- Reduce or eliminate off-street parking requirements for existing buildings and consider reduced requirements for off-street parking for commercial uses when part of mixed-use residential.
- Invest in Human Experience features within public right-of-way and encourage their incorporation into private civic spaces.
- Upgrade streets to have pedestrian-friendly features, such as curb extensions, raised crossings, and street trees.



Railroad Corridor

- Maximum building height of 100' or 8 stories.
- Ensure orientation toward railroad corridor in anticipation of future rail-with-trail and transit uses.
- Pursue addition of pedestrian and bicyclist underpass or overpass west of Meridian Road.
- Allow first floor residential unless adjacent to planned station location and streets.

Neighborhood Enhancement

- Preserve existing residential uses.
- Update policies to promote Accessory Dwelling Units to allow residents to keep their property viable for continued single-family housing.
- Upgrade streets with sidewalk connections and neighborhood traffic circles.
- Create residential parking zones to prohibit unwanted encroachment of downtown parking.

Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



Traditional City Core 1 & 2

Realizing this plan's stated goal for incremental steps to growth in downtown starts with the two Traditional City Core areas. This means considering policy changes that allow for:

- Building heights to complement existing historic buildings, thus reducing height maximums contained in the existing Old Town zoning district.
- Design standards that are modern and unique, yet honor the area's history; and
- Growing the footprint of mixed-use properties while being flexible to allow it to work financially for developers.

Realizing this vision requires the city to consider the goals for downtown within an update to its comprehensive plan, and then aligning these plans with an update to city ordinances. A building height maximum of 75' (or 5 stories) is recommended.

Providing predictability to developers is crucial as they must adjust to changes in financial and consumer markets, development costs, and other factors out of their control. Some strategies the city may consider to provide predictability include:

- **Pre-approved Building Plans for Housing:** Such plans can include a variety of housing types and for various lot sizes indicative of those in TCC 1 and 2. Pre-approved designs

Traditional City Core Priorities

Redevelopment

Consider zoning code changes to ensure development fits the vision for downtown, while allowing market-based proposals to succeed. This includes things like pre-approved development plans for multi-story residential properties, ensuring downtown development policies allow for efficient review and approval, and parking policies that optimize existing spaces.

Transportation

Plan for a pedestrian and bicyclist railroad underpass/overpass to the west of Meridian Road (highest priority) and to the east of East 3rd Street (lower priority). Identifying the location will help preserve the access as the area redevelops.

Accommodate wayfinding and bicycle-related infrastructure when the rail-with-trail option is feasible. This includes connections to the pathway from adjacent streets and secured bicycle storage within multi-story residential developments in lieu of on-street bike racks.

Parks & Open Space

View the railroad corridor as an opportunity to create a linear green space that helps buffer the tracks and enhances the frontage along adjacent development.



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



reduce the subjectivity in the development process and provide developers, residents, and businesses certainties on the type, appearance, and function of housing.

- **Ensure Efficient Review & Approval is Maintained:** Continually review the policies and procedures for downtown development review and approval to ensure these timelines are similar to developments in other areas of the city.

This may include recognizing the utility and cost savings from a proposal for emerging practices such as modular multi-story residential units, including understanding that the story height for a modular unit is generally 12 feet compared to 10 feet for traditional, site-built construction. The purpose of such an action is to get as many customers living in downtown as quickly as possible to help usher in commercial investment.

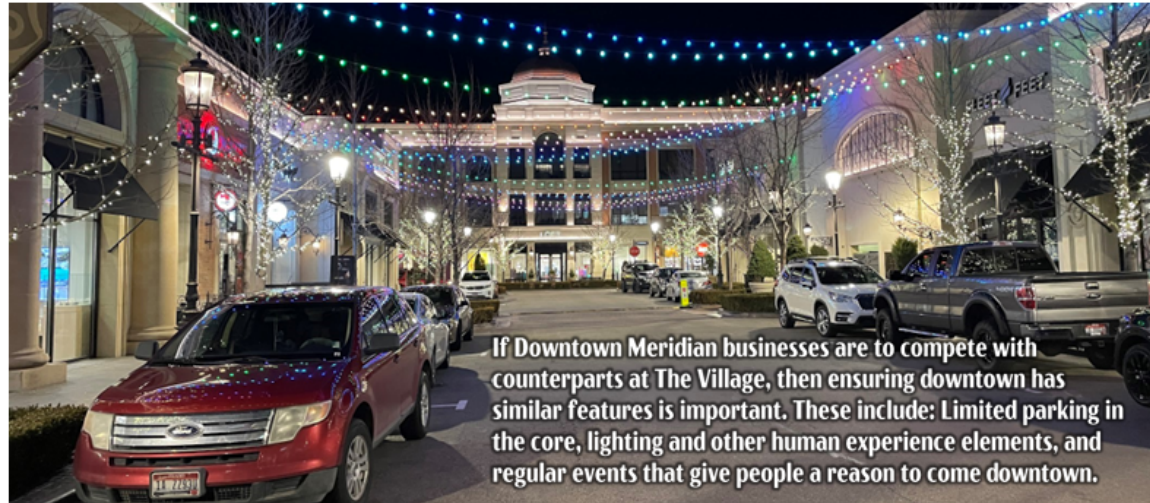
- **Incentivize Adaptive Reuse of Buildings & Parking:** A third strategy is incentives that can help developers overcome challenges not faced by greenfield development: Older utilities, ensuring older buildings meet modern ADA, fire and building codes, and limited opportunities for on-site parking.

- **Parking Policies:** A key incentive is minimum requirements for on-site parking. The result of the parking analysis undertaken for this plan made it clear that, even during weekday and weekend peak periods, downtown has a significant amount of available surface parking. If on-street and off-street parking managed using the strategies in the parking study, the relatively low stress parking environment can be maintained and improved without substantial investments in parking infrastructure.

In order for a developer to meet the demands of on-site parking requirements, they either need to dedicate limited surface acreage or construct parking through vertical integration via pedestal parking garages. In either case, such land or construction can be very expensive and even prohibitive, while depleting the city economic return on that property in terms of reduced property taxes.

- **Improve the Human Experience:** The final strategy to implement should be taken by the city, MDC, and groups like the Chamber of Commerce. Namely, focus on the creation of a highly unique, safe, fun, and interesting downtown. By pursuing the recommendations made in the Human Experience chapter, as well as the placemaking concepts in the “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper,” plan developed for Downtown several year ago, Meridian would find itself in a class of its own.

Delivering to residents, workers, property owners, and the development community an environment bounteous in sensations and emotional stimulations will bring a buzz unlike other cities. The public investments made will create a downtown where the development world will be forced to take notice and continue to seek ways to be part of something special.



If Downtown Meridian businesses are to compete with counterparts at The Village, then ensuring downtown has similar features is important. These include: Limited parking in the core, lighting and other human experience elements, and regular events that give people a reason to come downtown.

Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



Railroad Corridor

The Union Pacific rail corridor presents a significant opportunity for downtown to improve the return on its value and address some of the city's and region's housing and job needs. At this time, development along the rail corridor is largely older industrial uses.

As that land becomes more valuable, the likelihood it is subject to redevelopment increases and the city and MDC are advised to ensure policies are ready to respond to this. The rail corridor and the parcels along it can be prepared for potential shifts in use as markets change, and commercial and residential activity increases with it. Given it is already buffered from the Traditional City Core 1 due to City Hall and the planned Union 93 block, this means the corridor can absorb building heights as currently zoned for in the Old Town zoning district (100' height or 8 stories).

Much discussion has been had regarding the potential for a regional passenger rail system and the city's pursuits of a rail-with-trail pathway. Both possibilities would drastically alter the landscape, land use demand, activity, and built environment along the corridor.

Even without major movement on those fronts, the city and MDC can provide a transit- and trail-ready corridor that will address other

Railroad Corridor Priorities

Redevelopment

Consider modifying zoning to promote development that is ready for future utilization of the railroad corridor to include a shared use pathway and potential public transit. Mitigating the floodplain issues west of Meridian Road will also allow for redevelopment of those properties.

Transportation

Plan for a pedestrian and bicyclist railroad underpass or underpass west of Meridian Road. Identifying the location will help preserve the access as the area redevelops and provided needed connectivity west of downtown.

Accommodate pathway-related infrastructure when the rail-with-trail option is feasible. This includes connections to the pathway from adjacent streets and secured bicycle storage within multi-story residential developments in lieu of on-street bike racks.

Parks & Open Space

View the railroad corridor as an opportunity to create a linear green space that helps buffer the tracks and enhances the frontage along adjacent development.



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



needs in the meantime. In recent years, the immediate vicinity has experienced such changes with City Hall and the Keller & Associates building. Mitigation of the Nine Mile Creek floodplain will bring more potential development to the area.

Land Use & Design Strategies

Conceptually, Transit Oriented Development is about framing the corridor itself and intensifying the land uses to coincide with transit services. Given current challenges with transit funding, creating transit- and trail-ready development is a more practical way to view the area.

Permitting redevelopment structures to consume most of the acreage in immediate rail corridor parcels, allowing taller structures than elsewhere in Old Town, orienting ground floor operations towards the corridor where possible, and overseeing appropriate residential development, will create a transit- and trail-ready hub.

Furthermore, the rail corridor can be viewed as a people-moving highway. Whether the passenger rail or rail-with-trail emerge first, the corridor has the potential to be a conduit for bringing people to downtown on a daily basis for work, experiences, and services.

Should this scenario unfold, it places residents, workers, and visitors within what's called a "first mile, last mile" situation where the beginning and end points of a trip made by

transit or by bike are also accommodating of these modes.

The key to the realization of these concepts for the rail corridor is to stimulate the high likelihood of remediation and mitigation from long term industrial use. Such costs could be barriers to construction in combination with conventional costs for demolition, material removal and disposal, and the development itself. Additionally, the complications and associated costs will likely mean any desires around below market rate housing or commercial rents, are non-starters. This is why partnerships and agreements between the city and/or MDC and property owners, as well as VRT, are key.

Further, rail corridor development should include design materials and treatments that minimize the effects of sound and vibration but embrace the thematic elements of the rail line. Building heights should be a minimum of three

stories or 35' and a recommended maximum of eight stories or 100', although higher buildings may be allowed.

Zoning implications around transit-ready development will require increases of building height, reductions for off-street parking, increased bicycle parking and safe storage, and more. Similar changes may be in order should the trail materialize, particularly for bicycling.

Mobility & Access

The transportation network in the vicinity of the rail corridor is largely already constructed or planned. The rail corridor itself will be subject to significant planning and design, should passenger rail service and/or a rail-with-trail pathway realized.

Providing additional railroad crossings for motor vehicles is cost prohibitive, but areas west of Meridian Road and east of East 3rd



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



Street would benefit from an additional pathway crossing. If the railroad remains in Union Pacific ownership, then underpasses or overpasses should be considered. If VRT someday receives ownership of the corridor, then at-grade crossings may be more attainable and could be used for emergency service access in addition to a pathway connection.

If at-grade crossings do not materialize, downtown partners should consider the challenges associate with either an underpass or overpass such a high water table area, height and span of an overpass, and all associated costs. Though the crossings are not feasible nor needed at this time, as redevelopment occurs major use conversions happen, the underpasses or overpasses will become more of a need.

Should either connection be built, people can move from one side of the tracks to the other in a more direct line of travel and without the safety concerns of an at-grade crossing.

Key to note is that city of Meridian would not likely be able to require development to pay for the total costs as they connect two separate properties. It therefore will be essential to work with developers to ensure a public easement is maintained for the tunnels or landings.

Cost sharing may get complicated, but could largely be split between the developer, city, and MDC.

Additional Features

Should passenger rail service result from the many conversations between UP and regional decision makers, additional enhancements and treatments will be needed.

The treatments will require several agencies other than the city and MDC. These include the railroad company itself, VRT, COMPASS, and potentially ACHD.

While funding for transit services and stations may be pursued by VRT and COMPASS, the city and MDC can ensure that development in the railroad corridor does not consume the land intended for a future stations and bus transfer points.

It is recommended that the city, MDC, and VRT engage in a planning process to identify the many support elements of a train station platform and bus transfer point to best determine where pedestrian connections should

be located. Once formalized by the city, this provides the rational nexus to require an easement or other accommodations for under or overpasses if development is located in the location identified through the study.

Parking for transit access can be negotiated for any private parking structures built to serve the tenants of redevelopment or may be secured through existing city-managed lots adjacent to the rail line.

Other supportive land uses in nearby mixed use development should be encourage to serve future transit patrons and nearby residents. These include day care facilities, dry cleaners, small convenience stores or bodegas, and grocers.



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



Neighborhood Enhancement Areas

Allowing greater density within the TCC 1, TCC 2, and Railroad Corridor can reduce the pressure for existing single- and multi-family residential properties to redevelop. This will help achieve the goal for preserving the character of Meridian's oldest neighborhoods.

- **Character Preservation.** A key component of achieving the goals for the Incremental Growth scenario is concentrating development on large, catalyst parcels within MDC boundaries. By doing so, more intense development on these properties can help reduce development pressure in neighborhoods east and west of TCC 1.

This can be achieved by bolstering land use policies to allow low density reuse of properties for single family homes and neighborhood commercial establishments. Setbacks should be maintained and policies eased to allow for accessory dwelling units, providing the main housing unit on the site is owner-occupied.

- **Parking Protection.** Concerns about the spillover of on-street parking from TCC 1 were identified in the parking analysis. Recommendations to help mitigate this concern is the establishment of a residential parking program that sets time-of-day and/

Neighborhood Enhancement Priorities

Redevelopment

Protect the existing neighborhood areas with policies that limit building heights and ensure consistency with existing setbacks.

Adopt policies that allow for Accessory Dwelling Units and live/work/create properties, as well as small-scale neighborhood commercial uses.

Transportation

Establish residential permit parking with restrictions on non-residential parking, as indicated in the parking analysis.

Upgrade intersections to include neighborhood traffic circles, starting with streets residents identify as problematic from a speed and cut-through traffic standpoint.

Upgrade crossings of Meridian Road to reduce barrier effect for neighborhoods to the west.

Parks & Open Space

Ensure existing neighborhood needs are integrated into new parks and open space developed within the TCC 1, TCC 2, and Railroad Corridor. Determine where pocket parks may be appropriate on vacant or underutilized lots within existing neighborhoods.



Meridian's Heartbeat

Old Town



or day-of-week restrictions. These must be enforced in order to make them effective and generate revenue to support enforcement and the permit program, as noted in the parking analysis

- **Traffic Circles.** Another transportation strategy to take in the Neighborhood Enhancement area is installing neighborhood traffic circles. Installing traffic circles in the established neighborhoods both east and west of the couplet would add identity, a uniqueness, and demonstrated safety elements. Further, if modest public art features can be installed inside the traffic circles, both areas would stand out among Meridian neighborhoods and be provided an opportunity unlike anywhere else in Ada County.

The strategy will need participation from ACHD and may need to be funded outside ACHD sources given the treatments are largely for local streets and not subject to impact fees. Nevertheless, using traffic circles rather than 2 or 4-way stop intersections has many benefits and can greatly enhance downtown Meridian. The images at right show an example of such traffic circles in neighborhoods in Salt Lake City.

- **Parks & Open Space.** These neighborhoods are void of public parks and open space. The city and MDC should consider establishing a neighborhood park west of Meridian Road and east of East 3rd Street to serve these areas. Such parks may be located along the railroad tracks or on small parcels obtained via strategic purchasing of properties as they go on the market or identifying publicly-owned remnant parcels.
- **Human Experience.** Residents of these areas should be recognized for their contribution to the downtown environment, as well as some of the sacrifices they make in living so close to downtown. Closing blocks or multiple streets for a neighborhood street fair or other event can honor that contribution and provide temporary open space as more permanent solutions are pursued.



Neighborhood traffic circles are used in many Intermountain West cities, including Salt Lake City (above and below), as well as Lewiston, Bozeman, and Missoula. Applying these treatments in neighborhoods adjacent to the Old Town Core will help alleviate traffic concerns as downtown grows.



Appendix

Appendix A: Code Changes for Consideration

The below-changes to consider address identified opportunities in the design process, use allowances, and design requirements/guidelines. Included are sample code provisions that may be added or amended as deemed appropriate by the city of Meridian.

Based on the unique historical characteristics of the Traditional City Core (TCC), input received during this process, and existing

transportation and land use patterns, a new overlay or underlying “TCC District” governing permit review procedures, architectural design standards, uses, height and off-street parking requirements is recommended.

The table below and on the following page provides an analysis of the existing code provisions currently applicable to the traditional core and offers proposed changes or

considerations to a newly established TCC district or overlay zone. In some cases, however, recommended standards may be considered for broader application within the existing Old Town Zoning District. The following is a summary of recommended changes and sample code provisions for consideration specific to the proposed TCC district or overlay.

Site/Building Element • Intent	Existing Standard	Changes to Consider
General and Minimum Code Standards (§11-3A-19, off-street parking, various)		
Building Orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve Old Town context. • Pedestrian-oriented streets. 	Minimum of 30%-40% of lot developed as a building or public space at street frontage.	Minimum of <u>50%</u> of lot (other than single family residential) developed as a building or pedestrian-oriented publicly-accessible space at street frontage.
Off-Street Parking & Orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuse of existing buildings. • Market-based code. • Pedestrian-oriented streets. 	Off-Street Parking Required (1/1000 SF for non-residential within O-T). 1-2 per unit for mixed use (no reduction for mixed-use provided) For sites over 2 acres, 50% of off-street parking may be between building and street. For those less, small off-street lots (with a single drive aisle) are allowed. Within traditional neighborhood districts, parking shall primarily be behind or to the side of buildings. Relief valve provided with screening.	Although for commercial uses, the standard is less than for other districts, off-street minimum parking requirements may still be a significant financial and spatial barrier where a use change for an existing building is proposed or where a business expansion is proposed. The long-term tradeoff may diminish vibrancy, walkability, gaps in the traditional/historic pattern in the core, reduced outdoor dining areas / other civic spaces, and the tax base. Surface parking lot abundance tend to decrease the feasibility of future structured parking facilities due to supply/demand. Where off-street parking is proposed, <u>prohibit it between a building and the frontage street (not alleys) in the TCC 1 and TCC 2.</u> <u>Where existing off-street parking borders a street, require landscaped screening or decorative fencing,</u> clarifying that chain link or vinyl fencing does not meet the standard. Consider substantially reducing or eliminating off-street parking requirements for certain commercial uses within the traditional core, such: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiving the first 10,000 SF of leasable space for commercial uses. • Removing the requirement in the existing parking code that requires additional parking for a change of use (to encourage repurposing of existing buildings) • Reduce minimum requirements for multi-family housing to 1 space per unit with no guest parking requirements.

Code Changes for Consideration, continued

Site/Building Element • Intent	Existing Standard	Changes to Consider
General and Minimum Code Standards (§11-3A-19, off-street parking, various), continued		
Alternative Compliance (§11-5B-5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlines process. Improves predictability. 	Planning Director may authorize alternative compliance based on precedent, feasibility, judgment that alternative is equal or better, and is not detrimental.	Replace “alternative compliance” with <u>administrative design departure for not more than 10% of a numerical dimensional standard</u> to eliminate subjective criteria for city staff to interpret. <u>Incorporate review procedure beyond 10% dimensional standards by a review body</u> with criteria for approval codified (see below table).
Allowed uses (TABLE 11-2D-2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves predictability. Pedestrian-oriented design 	<u>Allowed by CUP:</u> Drinking Establishments Drive-Throughs <u>Permitted:</u> Single family detached/attached Duplexes/townhouses Multi-family (non-mixed use) Parking facility (private)	<u>Permit drinking establishments outright in TCC 1</u> to reduce timing, uncertainty, and cost for applicants. Permit drinking establishments on first floors of buildings fronting streets in non-residential areas of TCC 2 and Railroad Corridor. Consider prohibiting certain drive through types throughout TCC 1, TCC 2, and Railroad Corridor with possible overlay, if needed as the TCC II and existing Old Town zone do not fully align. Drive throughs generate excessive vehicle trips and otherwise interfere with the pedestrian focus of the TCC. This could include coffee shops and fast food. Pharmacy and bank drive throughs may be placed within an alley. Consider limiting low-density development, such as single family housing, and private surface parking facilities within the TCC 1 and Railroad Corridor to maintain/enhance density and vibrancy and encourage redevelopment. This parking restriction would apply to private surface parking lots that are not ancillary to a principal use (e.g. privately-owned, for-profit surface parking lots).
General and Minimum Code Standards (§11-3A-19-4d)		
Pedestrian Treatments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve Old Town context. Pedestrian-oriented streets. 	Pedestrian pathways with a change in materials required. Walkways shall have weather protection within 20 feet of customer entrances.	Clarify weather protection with a dimensional standard for new development such as a <u>minimum of 4 feet required for awnings</u> , with accommodations for ADA requirements related to clear height and protrusion. Applies to first two floors of buildings. Remove term “amenities” for references to pedestrian infrastructure and treatments. Consider Old Town district specific standards that may go beyond the requirement (4d.) in order to maintain the desired downtown treatments.
Traditional Neighborhood Code Standards (§11-2D-3)		
Encroachments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian-oriented design 	Allowed up to 2 feet on upper stories	Clarify encroachments allowed in any setback to include awnings on first two floors for purposes beyond weather-related coverage for people accessing the building. Awnings may be considered on upper floors for aesthetic purposes.
Additional Height Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizes downtown financial productivity. Allows more market-based development. 	Allowed up to 20% in the “core” of Old Town subject to alternative compliance approval by Planning Director. Over 20% (not more than 50%) allowed by CUP.	<u>Eliminate provision</u> , which may be a holdover from before height was increased to 100’ in Old Town.

Code Changes for Consideration, continued

Site/Building Element • Intent	Changes to Consider
<p>Architectural Details for Development Code and Architecture Standards Manual (ASM),</p> <p><i>Emphasis on First Two Floors for street-facing features</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximizes downtown financial productivity. • Allows more market-based development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance Orientation: Primary building entries should face the street. If the doorway does not face the street, a marked and well-maintained path shall connect the entry to a sidewalk or non-motorized pathway. Buildings shall have at least one pedestrian entrance oriented to a street. • Windows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Consistently spaced and similarly shaped windows with trim or other decorative molding shall be incorporated on all building stories. ◦ A minimum of 30% opaque windows or doors are required on ground-floor street-facing facades. ◦ A minimum of 20% non-opaque window coverage is required on upper stories. • Siding: Building siding must be or show a likeness to traditional materials typical of historic buildings within the downtown core (brick, stone, or wood) for at least 50% of the siding area. Highly reflective materials are prohibited. • Roofs: Pitched roofs shall incorporate eaves and contain 2 or more roof planes. Flat roofs shall provide a decorative cornice or design detail that creates interest at the top of the roof. Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened from public view at ground level by incorporation of false roofs, parapets, fencing, lattice, or similar material. • Floor Differentiation: Differentiation shall be provided between floors which may include porches, balconies, awnings, trellises, a change in material, recesses, projections, or similar treatment. • Facade Treatments: Facades greater than 50 feet in length shall incorporate recesses or projections with a minimum 2-foot differentiation along at least twenty percent (20%) of the length of the facade. • Corner Lots: Buildings located on corner lots shall incorporate a chamfered or beveled corner (or similar look) to allow for greater access and mobility for pedestrians at these corners. The chamfered or beveled corner is preferred to be the main first floor entrance. This design maintains the historical look of Old Town and traditional corner building design. It also maintains the preferred sight triangle desired by ACHD at intersections. • Treatment of blank side walls: Uninterrupted expanses of blank side walls longer than 30 feet that are visible from public right-of-way shall incorporate one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Vegetation such as trees, shrubs, ground cover and/or vines adjacent to the wall surface; ◦ Artwork, such as a mural, trellis/vine panels, or bas-relief sculpture; and ◦ Architectural detailing, reveals, contrasting materials or similar treatment.

Code Changes for Consideration, continued

Procedures & Criteria for Design Departures

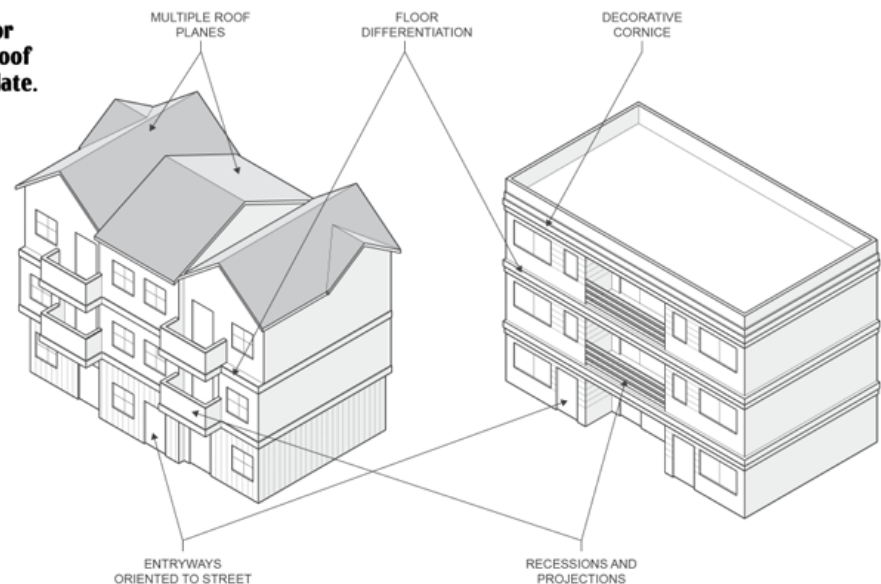
When design standards apply, consideration of relief valves for new or expanded development may be advisable to provide flexibility. While a variance can be applied for to modify development requirements such as lot size, lot coverage, setbacks, parking spaces, and height of buildings, they also trigger specific requirements and a “high bar” of findings per §67-6516 of the Idaho code. Waivers for architectural design elements, however (whether administrative or by a review body) may be based on specific criteria established by the city, such as the following:

- The applicant’s design team has thoroughly examined how the requirement could be applied as written.
- The proposed design departure meets the intent and general direction set forth by the requirement and/or adopted policy by the city.
- The specific change is superior in design quality to that potentially achieved by the requirement.
- The departure is necessary to better address aspects of the site or its surroundings.
- The departure is part of an overall, thoughtful, and comprehensive approach to the design of the project.
- The applicant has responded to optional considerations, if any, found within the standard.

Alternatively, the departure may be granted if: (A) the specific use requires a unique site and building development that would otherwise prohibit meeting the intent or (B) the location of existing buildings or structures prevents conformance with the standard.

- **Administrative Design Departures.** Design departures that are less than 10% of a dimensional design standard are administered by city staff.
- **Review Board Design Departures.** Design departures proposed other than those that constitute less than 10% of a numerical or dimensional standard may be reviewed and decided by the Planning Commission or other quasi-judicial body, such as a design review board as and if established by the city.

Example of a illustration for incorporating façade and roof treatments into a code update.



Amending the Architectural Standards Manual (ASM)

- Eliminate the “Design Standards Exceptions” section in lieu of the proposed design departure procedures recommended above, which may apply broadly.
- Exclude the proposed TCC District, if established, from the ASM.

Example of a supporting illustration for blank-wall treatments in a code update.

