



Mayor Robert E. Simison

City Council Members:

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Joe Borton

Luke Cavener

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EXHIBIT A TO PZ-21-06
(1st Amendment to Union District)

September 30, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Robert Simison
Meridian City Council
Meridian Planning & Zoning Commission

CC: David Miles, Chief of Staff
Cameron Arial, Community Development Director
Victoria Cleary, Economic Development Administrator
Caleb Hood, Planning Division Manager

FROM: Brian McClure, Comprehensive Associate Planner

RE: First Amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan for the Union District Urban
Renewal Project

This memo is intended to confirm consistency of the City's Comprehensive Plan with the proposed amendment to the Union District Urban Renewal Plan. The proposed Union District plan amendment (Plan Amendment) is to annex an additional 1.46 acres into the existing Union District boundary. The amendment language indicates that there are no substantive changes to the Union District (District), other than to generally update facts and figures based on or derived from the new total District physical area.

This memo assumes that Comprehensive Plan analysis in 2020, for the original District, is still applicable and current for the following reasons:

- no vertical construction has occurred within the Union District (District);
- no appreciable changes to taxable revenue as a result of development have occurred;

- no new projects types outside of the original District plan are proposed in the Plan Amendment;
- the originally described activities and projects are still valid and may support efforts to reach the desired vision of the Comprehensive Plan; and
- no amendments to the Comprehensive Plan have been approved which influence land use decisions or development review.

Additionally, the proposed annexation is relatively small at 1.46 acres. The Plan Amendment area includes 11 parcels, two of which are extraordinarily narrow strips (totaling 0.005 acres or 217 square-feet), and three of which are vacant (0.250 acres). Additionally, 0.407 acres are public right-of-way which include a portion of Idaho Ave and the east-west mid-block alley. Of the 11 parcels (9 functional), there are 5 primary owners. There are 4 primary owners of existing buildings, some of which are divided into smaller tenant spaces.

Recommendation

Based on the activities in the original Union District and limited scope of the annexation, Staff believes establishing this annexation may be an effective tool in implementing the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan. **Accordingly, Staff recommends that the Commission move to approve the associated Resolution identifying the proposed First Amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan for the Union District Urban Renewal Project, as conforming to the City of Meridian’s Comprehensive Plan.**

General Comprehensive Plan Analysis

While the Union District annexation is limited in scope, the following text describes general applicable policies that should be considered with future activities and development. This analysis is in consideration of future needs, concerns, and activities, and how the annexed area of the Union District may fit within a broader context, but not of the proposed amendment and annexation itself. The following analysis is narrowed to the amendment only, and not the broader Union District. For context, the Union District amended description of principles states,

The First Amendment embraces the principles set forth in the Plan and proposes improvements to public infrastructure and other publicly owned assets throughout the expansion area, creating the framework for the development of mixed-use, residential, commercial, and retail areas, improvements to other public facilities, including, but not limited to, streets, streetscapes, water and sewer improvements, environmental remediation/site preparation, public parking, community facilities, and pedestrian/bike amenities. The expansion area is underdeveloped and is not being used to its highest and best use due to age and obsolescence, as well as faulty lot layout and diversity of ownership.

The Plan Amendment includes other updates to text and attachments of the original Plan. Where the original Union District was clearly intended to make use of tax increment financing (TIF) to address new and well-defined opportunities, such as development of the former Union Pacific property, this annexation is less clear. The stated amendment principles are admirable, but it is not clear why the original downtown Urban Renewal District did not previously address the

same identified short-comings prior to de-annexation. Further, it is unclear what circumstances have changed in the context of the described issues, or what specific public participation may be necessary to address identified short-comings in the context of new opportunities. While the area proposed for inclusion in the Union District is small in geographic area, the purpose for inclusion is not evident. Regardless, no specific development is proposed and the general list of principles and activities are generally desired by the Comprehensive Plan. This annexation into the Union District is a new opportunity to correct historical deficiencies within a defining block of Downtown.

Plan Text

The Evolving Community section (Chapter 3) of the Comprehensive Plan, defines future land use typologies. The only land use designation in this area is Old Town:

This designation includes the historic downtown and the true community center. The boundary of the Old Town district predominantly follows Meridian's historic plat boundaries. In several areas, both sides of a street were incorporated into the boundary to encourage similar uses and complimentary design of the facing houses and buildings. Sample uses include offices, retail and lodging, theatres, restaurants, and service retail for surrounding residents and visitors. A variety of residential uses are also envisioned and could include reuse of existing buildings, new construction of multi-family residential over ground floor retail or office uses.

The City has developed specific architectural standards for Old Town and other traditional neighborhood areas. Pedestrian amenities are emphasized in Old Town via streetscape standards. Additional public and quasi-public amenities and outdoor gathering area are encouraged. Future planning in Old Town will be reviewed in accordance with Destination Downtown, a visioning document for redevelopment in Downtown Meridian. Please see Chapter 2 Premier Community for more information on Destination Downtown. Sample zoning include O-T.

The Old Town future land use is the most diverse designation in the City's land use portfolio. It has the greatest combined range of residential and non-residential uses and no caps on density or intensity of developed uses. Further, the City's complimentary zoning, also named Old Town (O-T), has zero setbacks for structures, reduced parking requirements, and reduced landscape setbacks aside from pedestrian streetscape infrastructure. All parcels in the proposed amendment boundary are already zoned O-T.

Plan Policies

The following text reference policies that are applicable to the proposed Plan Amendment text. The first number of a policy ID references the Chapter.

- 2.02.02C, Support infill development that does not negatively impact the abutting, existing development. Infill projects in Downtown should develop at higher densities, irrespective of existing development.

Neither the original District plan or this Plan Amendment are clear in how redevelopment may be respectful of existing development. Public participation may however be able to

greatly mitigate private development impacts. The Plan Amendment describes a thorough list of public improvements that may help to offset costly redevelopment, and both the Plan Amendment and the original District plan indicate opportunities for the Meridian Development Corporation to negotiate additional standards along with public participation.

- 2.09.01B, Establish incentives to develop gathering spaces and civic facilities within Downtown.

The Plan Amendment lists a number of public improvements that could improve public spaces, including community facilities and streetscape enhancements. These types of improvements would likely require public-private projects due to the cost, size, and location within public right-of-way and given the limited size of the Plan Amendment area.

- 2.09.02A, Actively implement action items in the Destination Downtown Plan.

*Destination Downtown was created by the Meridian Development Corporation for the original downtown Urban Renewal District (URD), and adopted by the City. This plan was extremely broad in land use diversity, area, and scope. Within Destination Downtown, the relevant area in the Plan Amendment is entirely within the Traditional City Core area. **This area is focused on traditional architecture themes, construction between 2 and 4 stories, continuous urban edge, vertical integration, and diversity of uses.** With the existing downtown URD set to expire in the coming years, the Plan amendment is an opportunity for more renewed and focused efforts, both geographically and in implementation activities.*

- 2.09.02B, Pursue grants and public-private partnerships to enhance Downtown.

Continuation of TIF funding could both provide grants and make more competitive applications for grants, by utilizing a dedicated funding source.

- 2.09.02G, Implement the City of Meridian Design Standards and City of Meridian Architectural Standards Manual to ensure that Downtown remains the historic center for mixed-use tourism, business, retail, residential, and governmental activities.

*This policy is not directly related to the Plan Amendment, but warrants re-review due to recent decisions and concerns elsewhere in the Union District and larger Downtown area. The City has land use authority over the project area and implementation of design and architectural standards must be met. However, these standards while allowing for the full range of uses described within the original District plan, does not necessarily cater to or encourage them in a context or towards any purpose. Neither the original District plan or the Plan Amendment describe historical context as something to preserve or build upon, but it is central to the Destination Downtown plan, and more specifically the Traditional City Core. **Additional work is necessary if downtown specific and historical context are desired.***

- 3.03.01E, Encourage infill development.

The unstated purpose of both the original District plan and the Plan Amendment, through virtually all of the goals, principles, and implementation strategies, is to encourage infill and greater density through redevelopment.

- 3.03.03G, Require urban infrastructure be provided for all new developments, including curb and gutter, sidewalks, water and sewer utilities.

The City has land use authority over the project area and urban infrastructure will be required with all redevelopment. Further, the Plan Amendment calls out specific

implementation strategies including road, curb, gutter, streetscape, lighting, stormwater, and others.

- 5.02.01A, Maintain and implement design and building standards for historically significant buildings and resources in Old Town.

*As noted in policy 2.09.02G, the Plan Amendment does not emphasize consideration for the historic character and quality of the overall Downtown area. If this element is important, then standards are needed to protect and/or enhance the general area character. **Currently, the City cannot enforce consideration of historic elements or general thematic qualities with administrative level approvals.** In Old-Town, this includes multi-family permits and multi-story buildings.*

Referenced Plans

The following plans are adopted by reference in the City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan, and are relevant material to the proposed Plan Amendment.

- Downtown Meridian Street Cross-section Master Plan

The Cross-section most specific for the Plan Amendment is Idaho Ave, where half of the street is included in the annexation area. Other bordering streets including Main, 2-1/2, and Broadway, and are either already in the Union District, or excluded. The applicable cross-sections are included as Attachment B. Because the Plan Amendment area does not take in the entire right-of-way of Idaho Ave, it is likely that a public-public partnership will be required to make improvements. Alternatively, improvements could wait until after the road is resurfaced by ACHD (reducing the crown and correcting drainage), or to constrain improvements to behind the existing curb. A significant number of stakeholders have changed since the original cross-section was adopted. Regardless of the final cross-section, an innovative design may be desired to increase placemaking opportunities and awareness of the block.

- Historic Preservation Plan

The Historic Preservation Commission and City adopted the Historic Preservation Plan in 2014. Several goals from the plan are relevant to the Union District Plan, including:

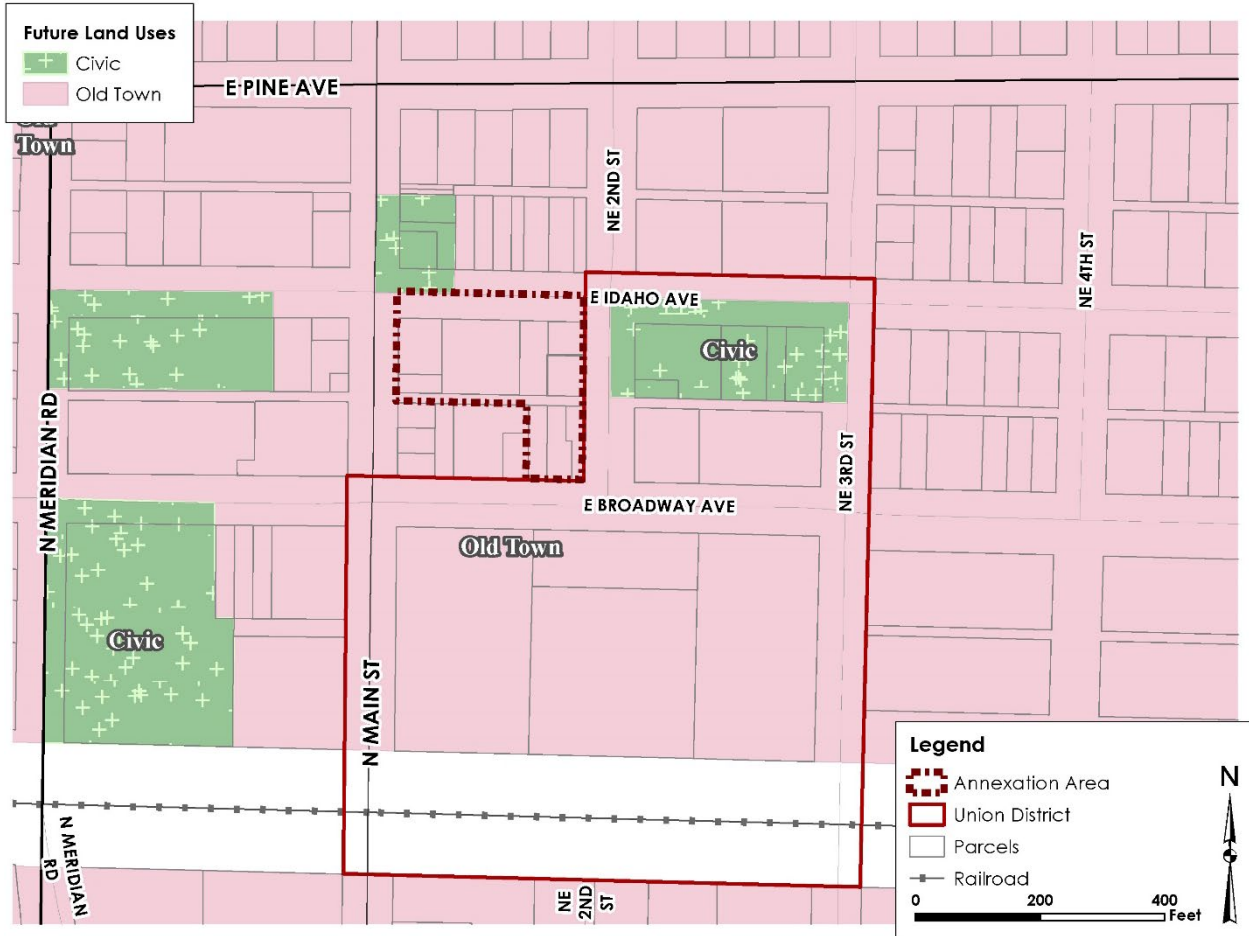
- *Goal 1 Preserve and enhance Meridian’s historical, cultural and agricultural heritage.*
- *Goal 3 Heighten public awareness of historic preservation in the community and improve preservation education efforts for various audiences.*
- *Goal 4 Maintain and strengthen support for historic preservation from individuals, commercial property owners, local organizations and neighborhood groups.*

*These goals for the Commission (and City) are not just about preserving, but also enhancing and generating awareness of Meridian’s history. Additional objectives for these goals are described within the plan. **Since areas of the Plan Amendment are near to historic structures and sites, awareness and care of both public and private efforts is important.***

These plans are available on the City’s Comprehensive Plan website at:

<https://meridiacity.org/planning/compplan/resources>.

Attachment A: Union District (Urban Renewal District)



Attachment B: Downtown Meridian Street Cross-section Master Plan Examples Idaho Avenue

CORRIDOR: Idaho Avenue

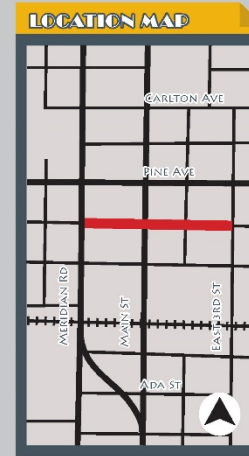
CORRIDOR: IDAHO AVENUE

Idaho is an iconic downtown corridor in Meridian, providing connectivity to Generations Plaza, Centennial Park, and the Meridian Community Center. This street also provides primary access for a number of popular shops and services between Main and East 2nd. Similarly to Broadway, Idaho is important for east-west connectivity, and with the exception of Pine, is significantly longer than every other east-west corridor in downtown. Currently, Idaho extends between West 8th and approximately East 6th. In the future, Idaho may be extended further east to Locust, though Broadway is the preferred alignment extension.

Idaho currently serves the Traditional City Core (TCC) district and both of the Neighborhood Preservation Areas (NPA) within the urban renewal area. The TCC district supports greater densities of mixed use development, iconic to traditional downtowns. The NPA are intended to preserve historic housing, promote residential infill, and provide a local base of residents to participate in events, frequent restaurants and shops, and to provide residential opportunities for individuals

and families interested in a more urban and pedestrian friendly environment.

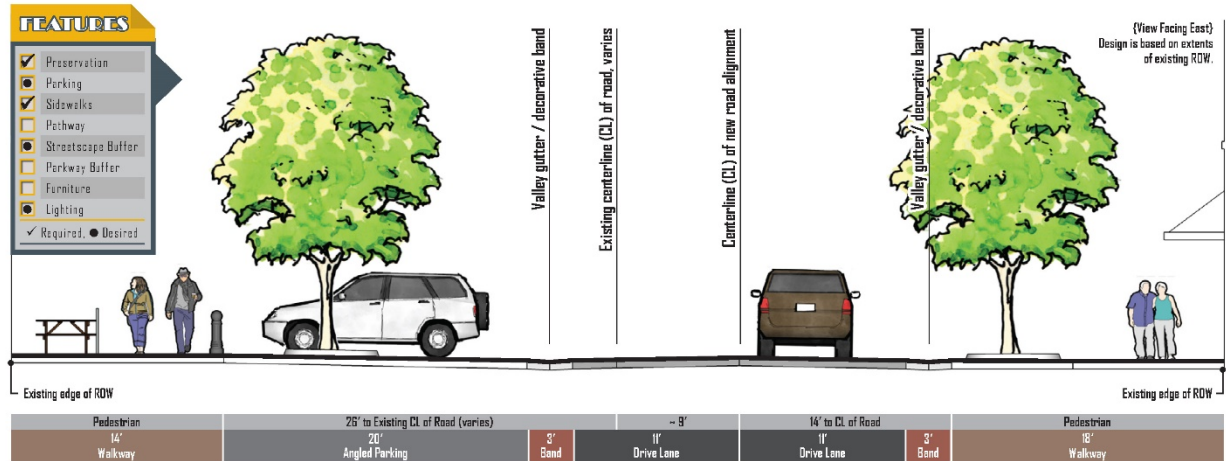
Idaho due to its location within downtown, the connectivity of the local roadway network, and its proximity to several key community resources, provides a framework for the corridor to act as a centerpiece of vibrancy and activity. Moving forward it should continue to host events, activities, and provide exciting opportunities for a variety of businesses and uses. The proposed cross-sections for Idaho establish this framework.



Despite streetscape improvements on both sides of the street, heavy surface parking, utility infrastructure, and government owned property limits activity on part of Idaho between Meridian Road and Main. With the exception of Sunrise Cafe and the Heritage Building, there are limited existing uses on this segment of Idaho with daily community draw into the downtown area.



IDAHO AVENUE: Main Street to East 2nd Street



IDAHO AVENUE
Main Street to East 2nd Street

CONSIDERATIONS:
This segment of Idaho between Main and East 2nd is the definitively classic downtown street. Businesses are a traditional downtown mix of restaurants, shops, and services, the buildings are older, and the street is spatially constrained. The streetscape is important for pedestrian connectivity, sharing a special connection with Main Street and Generations Plaza, and connecting to both the Meridian Community Center and Centennial Park.

INTENT:
This cross-section is intended to enhance the streetscape and provide greater opportunities for pedestrian and business use. The priority improvements with this cross section are pedestrian safety, creating greater opportunities for businesses streetscape presence (such as outdoor dining),

and aesthetic enhancements such as street furnishings, way-finding, and banners. Parking is important, but considered secondary to unique place-making opportunities which allow for both safe pedestrian facilities and business uses.

DESCRIPTION OF ULTIMATE CONDITIONS:
Due to the central location and importance of Idaho, this street uses a unique cross-section to address parking considerations while maximizing the pedestrian environment. Parallel parking which currently exists on both sides of the street has been relocated and converted to perpendicular parking on the north side. Existing curb cuts for a parking lot on the south side of the street, currently serving a bank, greatly reduces the effectiveness of on-street parallel parking configurations and parking availability for other businesses. Without dedicated turn lanes at intersections and because the street corridor does not serve as a throughway, drive speeds are envisioned to be slower with limited impacts to safety by back out parking.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS:
Because a rebuild of this street is a total re-configuration that calls for removal of curbs, relocation of all trees, and changes to finished grade, this street segment should be reconstructed all at once. Curbs may be included, but reduce emphasis on the pedestrian. Full closure is likely unnecessary as elements may still be phased. This redevelopment project is envisioned to occur as a public-private or public-public partnerships. In the interim, maintenance should continue to occur and efforts made to ensure safe conditions of existing walkways and other improvements. The unique design of this street will require further considerations, additional refinement, and coordination with ACHD.

	Existing	Future
Cross-section Width	80-foot (ROW)	80-foot
Road	Two-way	Two-way
Parking	Parallel (both sides)	Perpendicular (one-side)
Parking Capacity*	18	21
Walkways (ea. side)	4 to 5-foot	10 to 14-foot
Buffer (ea. side)	Varies	Varies
Pathway	None	None
Bike Support	None	None

* Parking impacts and future values are estimates. Do not indicate interim conditions, and assume full compliance with cross section. Driveways, fire hydrants, and other conditions may alter final count. See Parking section under Street Design.