

Comparing 3rd Street vs. 2 1/2 Street;

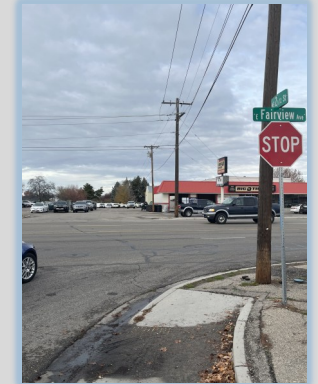
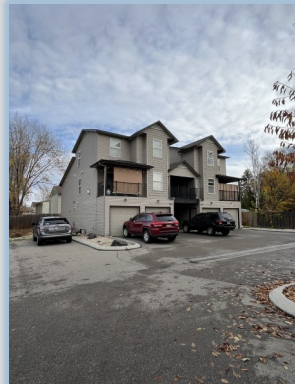
A white paper examining the policies, effects, and probability of success of the East 3rd Street Corridor

Submitted to:

Meridian Development Corporation and

Meridian City Council

June, 2026



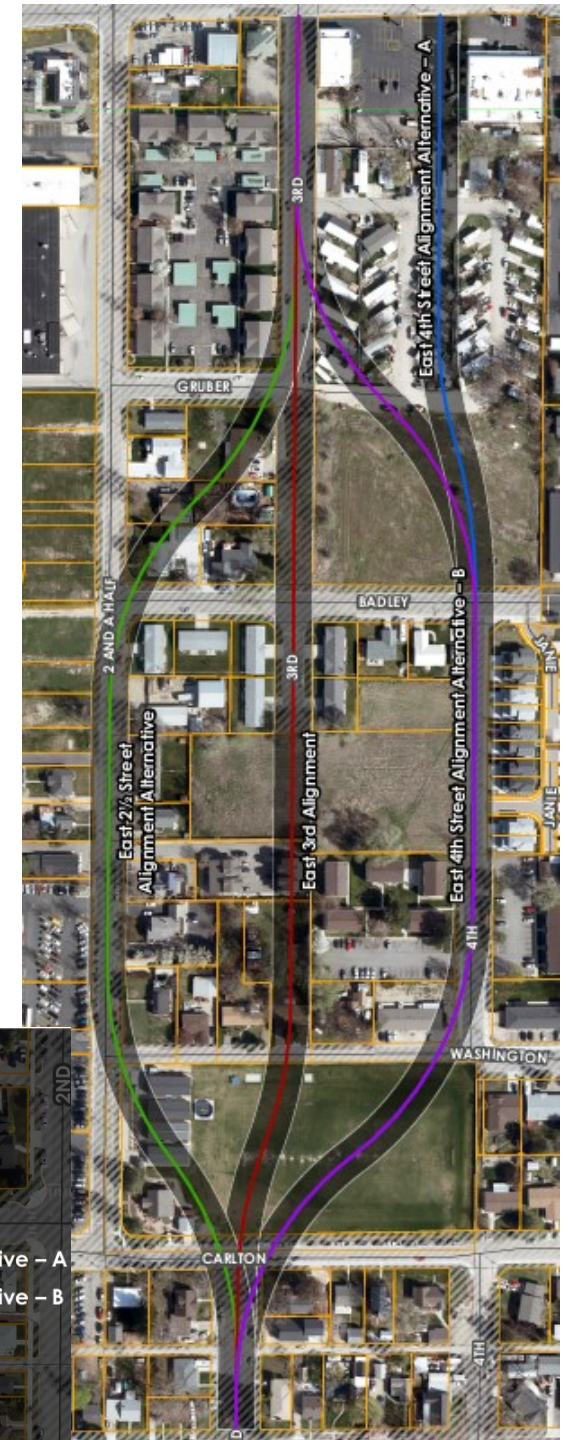
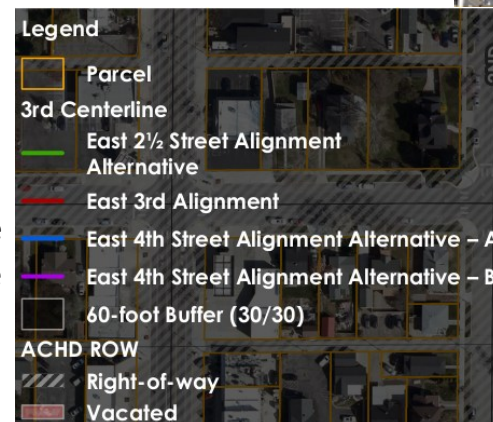
Introduction & Background

The connection of the 3rd Street corridor between Franklin and Fairview in downtown Meridian has been a topic of discussion among the city, Meridian Development Corporation (MDC), and Ada County Highway District (ACHD) for three decades. While 3rd Street is continuous for nearly 3/4 mile from Franklin to Carlton, the northernmost 1/4 mile (pictured at right) lacks a direct connection to Fairview.

A 2008 study was the last official examination of potential alignments for creating a 3rd Street connection. The purpose of the study and the corridor was, and remains, to create a collector-level street connection that parallels the Main/Meridian couplet, providing a more local north-south connection into and out of downtown. Doing so is intended to reduce traffic pressure on the couplet, allow downtown residents to improve route directness, foster a quieter, calmer street for bicyclists and pedestrians, and connect Fairview Avenue to an eventual canal pathway to the north. The study was conducted in conjunction with the timing of the Meridian Split Corridor, a major transportation project in downtown Meridian that created a wider, north-south arterial with fewer traffic signals and greater access control.

Several conditions and assumptions present in the 2008 study have changed. Most notable are the likely relocation of the Cole Valley Christian school campus, an approved land use application on the site of a key mobile home park, increased right-of-way and construction costs, and the possibility of a 3rd Street/Fairview traffic signal.

This report is intended to explore a previously unexamined alignment, update the status of 2008 conditions and assumptions, incorporate the findings and recommendations of *Destination: Downtown*, and provide options for the City, MDC, and ACHD to consider.



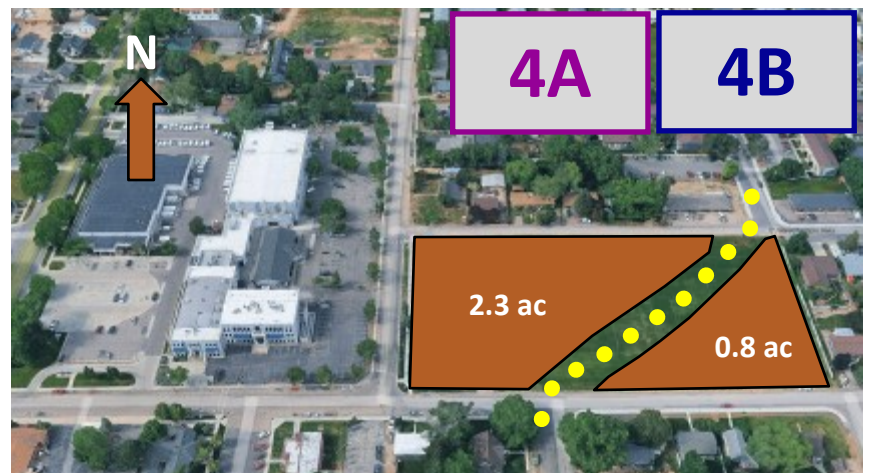
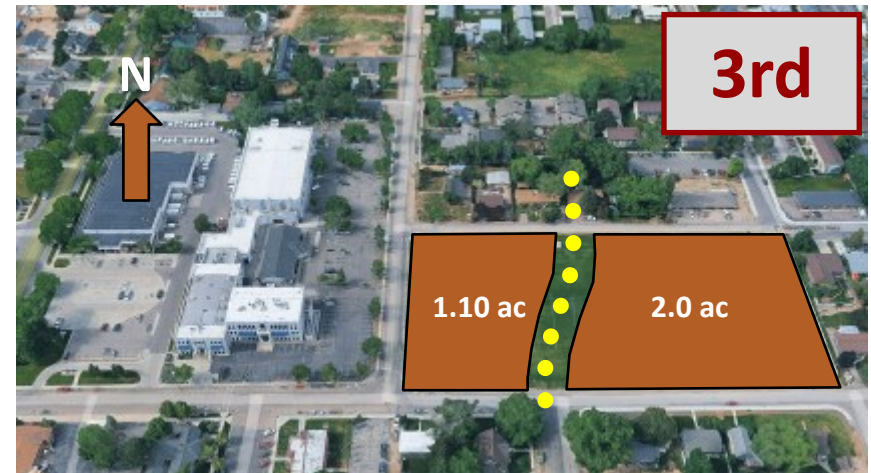
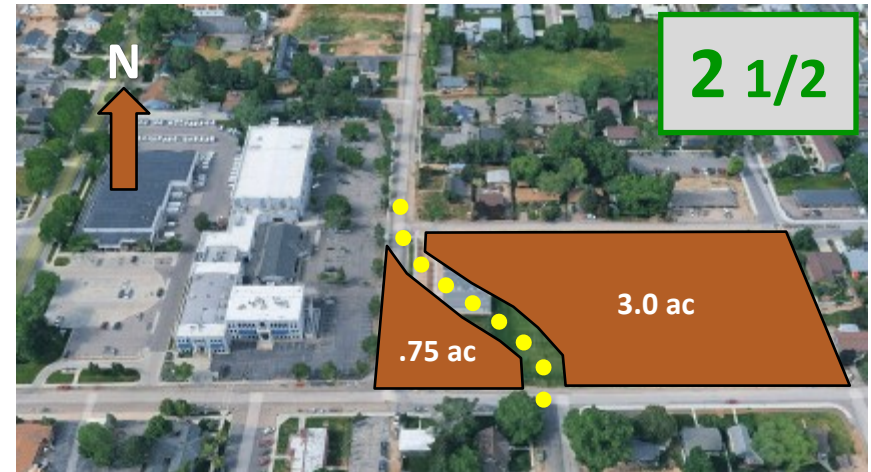
Cole Valley Christian School Campus

The 2008 study examined four alignments to connect Fairview to Carlton using either 2 1/2 Street, 3rd Street, or 4th Street. A primary assumption of the study is that the Cole Valley Christian School field will span East 3rd Street across all four alignments.

During the study, the consensus was that the school would be in operation for the foreseeable future. However, the school is now likely to relocate and consolidate with other campuses as fundraising efforts are underway to make this move. This means the site will be sold, and redevelopment is likely, including the use of the field. The campus and the land it sits on present major opportunities for downtown's future, including alignment options.

Any redevelopment of the school campus likely involves repurposing buildings and creating field space. The portable classroom buildings currently on-site can be relocated to the new campus or sold, providing a source of funds. The result will be a field space that can accommodate any of the examined alignments, leaving newly created parcels to be developed either in conjunction with the campus site or independently.

The newly created parcels resulting from bisecting the field would vary considerably in size, shape, and complexity for future development. In the 2 1/2 street alignment, the western parcel and the existing street segment would likely be vacated and consolidated with the parcel and the existing school site. The resulting eastern portion would form a roughly 3-acre parcel bounded by streets on three sides. The adopted 3rd Street alignment would likely allow the existing 2 1/2 street section to be maintained while creating a 1.1-acre parcel on the west and creating a 2-acre parcel to the east, both bounded by streets on three sides. The 4th street sections (which were added to the study after public input) would result in the continuation of the 2 1/2 street section and create a 2.3-acre parcel to the west and a .8-acre



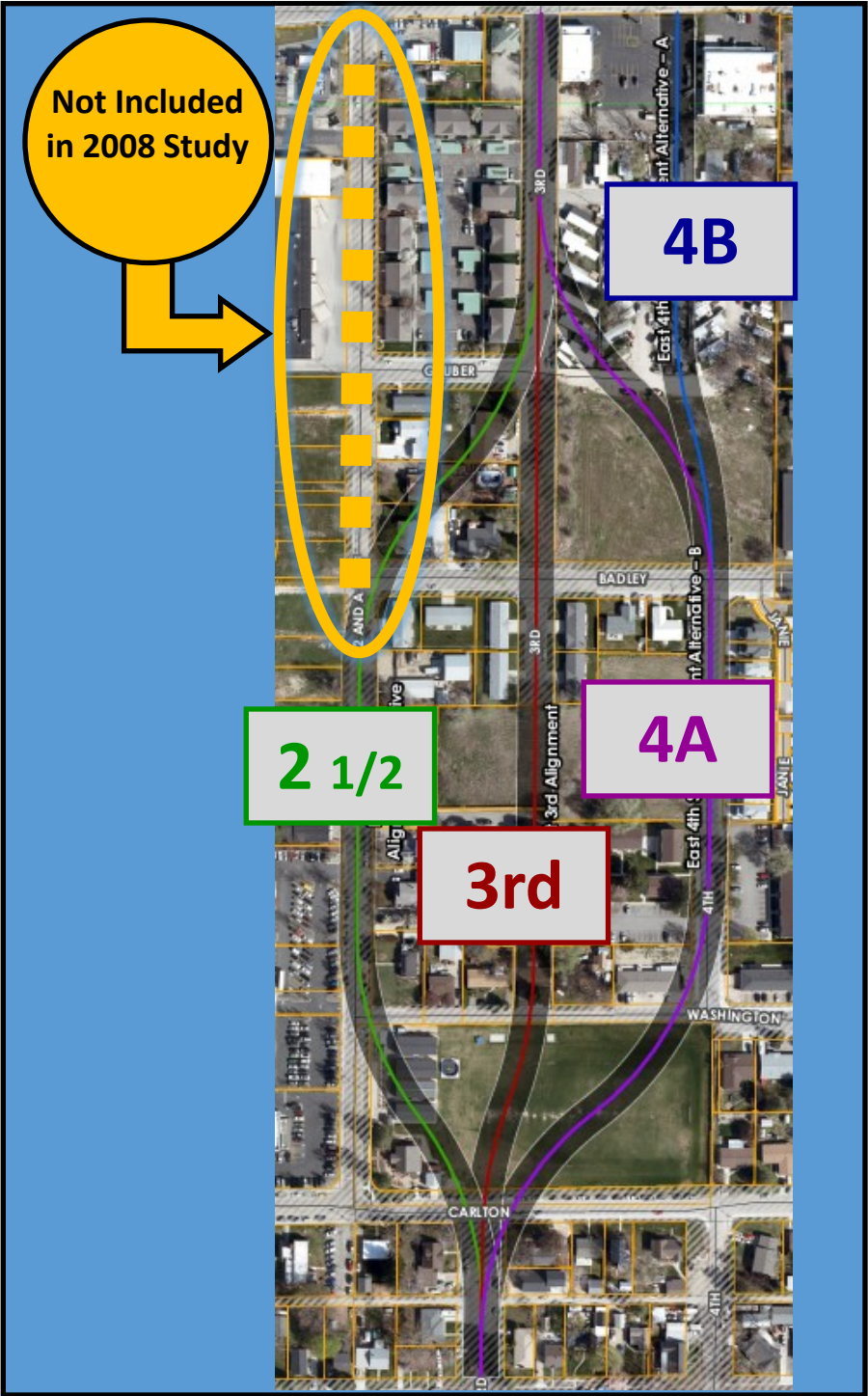
parcel to the east. An important distinction between the western parcels created in the 2 1/2 street proposal and the 4th street proposal is the probability of absorption by the adjacent properties. Unlike the west parcel in the 2 1/2 street option, the .8-acre parcel to the east with the 4th street proposal cannot be vacated, as there is no street segment, creating a small and difficult-shaped lot to develop, given setback requirements.

Right-of-Way Impacts

The 2008 study included a significant examination of the right-of-way implications of the four possible alignments. They are shown in the illustration on the right. One alignment that was not included was to extend the 2 1/2 street proposal north to use the existing street before connecting to Fairview Avenue. The original 2 1/2 Street option assumed a second S - curve from 2 1/2 back towards 3rd Street, before ultimately connecting with Fairview.

Right-of-way and construction cost estimates were developed for each alignment. The right-of-way costs varied due to the impacts of building a new road and the properties and structures within the alignment. Below is an overview of the projected right-of-way costs in 2008, based on figures from that time. According to the Ada County Tax Assessor's office, properties in the area have increased in value by roughly 130%. Using this figure as an escalator results in a revised right-of-way estimate.

Alignment	2008 ROW Estimate	2025 ROW Estimate
2 1/2	\$1,341,000	\$3,084,300
3rd	\$1,296,000	\$2,980,800
4th A	\$1,467,000	\$3,374,100
4th B	\$1,310,000	\$3,013,000



2 1/2 Street Alignment. The 2 1/2 street alignment included two “S” curves that swept across the Cole Valley Christian athletic field, then back to the east to align onto 3rd Street. The sweeping eastward bend was intentional to prevent a connection between Fairview and 2 1/2 Street. Except for the field impacts, it is the northern sweeping curve that requires significant right-of-way and several “total takes,” or a complete purchase from property owners.

The number of housing units is highest among the alternatives due to two multi-family units to the north and south of Gruber Avenue. If the second S - curve was eliminated and the alignment along the 2 1/2 Street section was maintained to Fairview, the property impacts would be limited to the Cole Valley Christian field and a partial acquisition of the property across Washington Avenue.

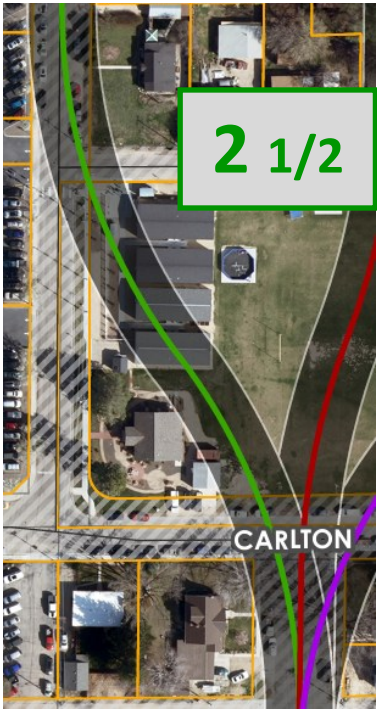
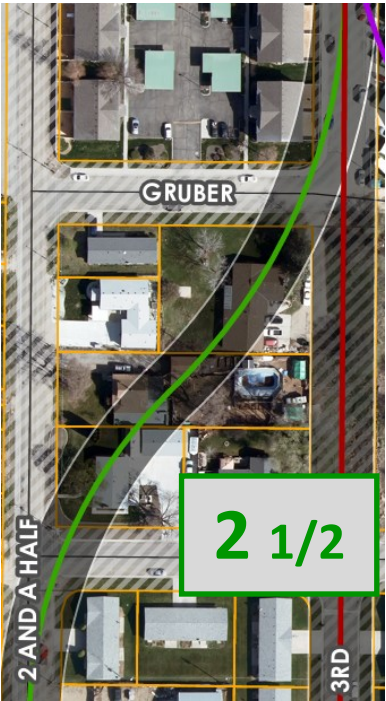
With Second S - Curve

- Impacted Properties : 7-8
- Total Takes: 5
- Housing Units: Up to 12

Without Second S Curve

- Impacted Properties: 2
- Total Takes: 0
- Housing Units: 0

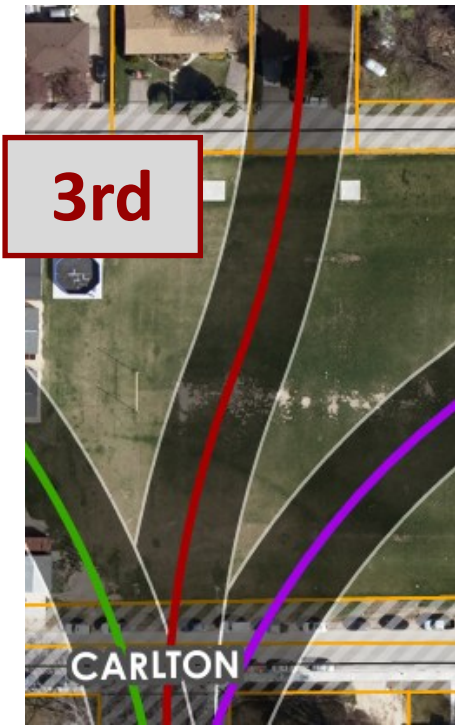
Alignment	2008 ROW Estimate	2025 ROW Estimate	2008 Constr. Estimate	2025 Constr. Estimate
2 1/2	\$1,341,000	\$3,084,000	\$1,636,000	\$2,945,000
Total Estimate (2025)				\$6,029,000



3rd Street Alignment. The 3rd Street alignment, which has been the adopted vision since 2008, also spans the Cole Valley Christian athletic field before crossing Washington Avenue and eventually connecting with Fairview in a straight line. To construct this alignment, several properties will need to be purchased and demolished, including the single-family homes nearest Washington Avenue, and a multifamily duplex just to the north. Additionally, the new collector street would bifurcate the four multi-family units located just south of Bradley Avenue, as the current street segment does not connect and acts as an extended driveway.

- Impacted Properties: 7
- Total Takes: 3
- Housing units: Up to 5

Alignment	2008 ROW Estimate	2025 ROW Estimate	2008 Constr. Estimate	2025 Constr. Estimate
3rd	\$1,296,000	\$2,981,000	\$1,465,000	\$2,637,000
Total Estimate (2025)				\$5,618,000



4th Street Alignments. The 4A street alignment also has two S-curves, one through the athletic field and another through a vacant parcel just south of a mobile home park. The southern curve extends from 3rd Street before connecting with East 4th Street, but would require the demolition of a three-unit apartment complex to complete the alignment. To the north, the second curve departs East 4th Street, crosses an empty lot, and aligns with East 3rd Street before connecting with Fairview. However, the alignment also requires the removal or demolition of several mobile homes to make the connection.

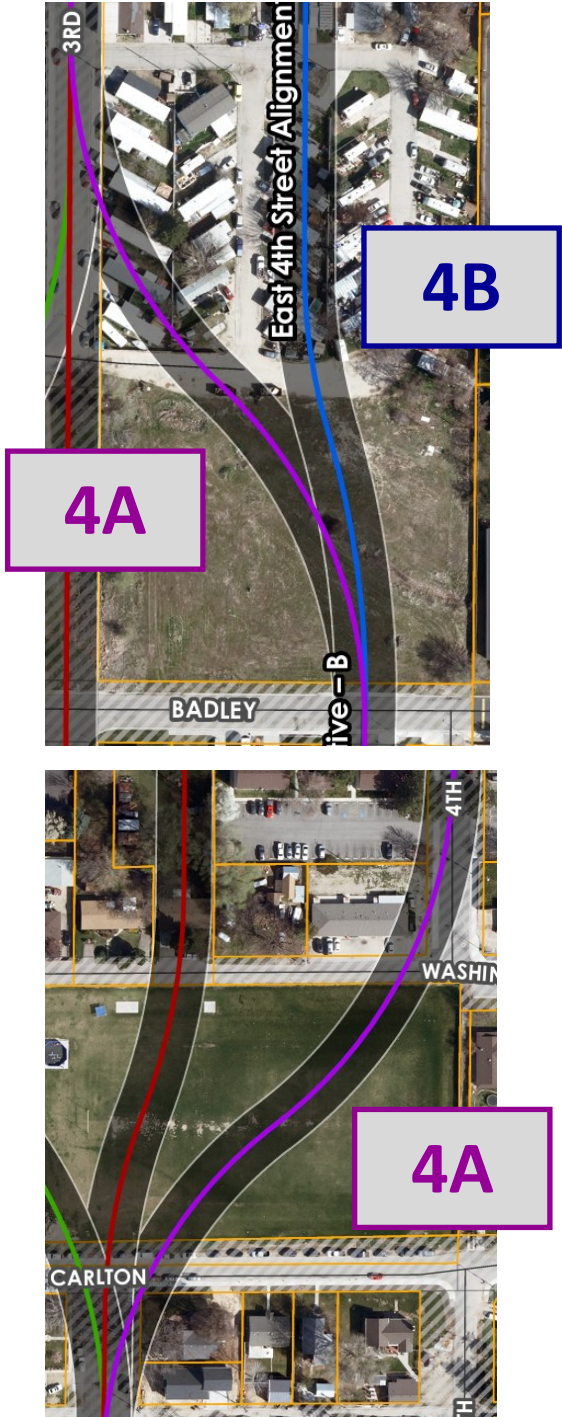
- Total Properties Affected: 7
- Total Takes: 1
- Total housing units: Up to 7

The 4B street alignment uses the same southern curve through the athletic field to connect with East 4th Street. However, the northern curve does not connect with another street and instead spans an existing parking lot before terminating at Fairview. This straighter route would require the removal of an entire row of mobile homes and bifurcate the mobile home park, and significantly reduce the parking stalls to a commercial restaurant.

- Total Properties Affected: 5
- Total Takes: 1
- Total housing units: Up to 6

National Highway Construction Cost Index

Alignment	2008 ROW Estimate	2025 ROW Estimate	2008 Constr. Estimate	2025 Constr. Estimate
4th A	\$1,467,000	\$3,374,000	\$1,682,000	\$3,028,000
Total Estimate			\$6,402,000	
4th B	\$1,310,000	\$3,013,000	\$1,713,000	\$3,083,000
Total Estimate			\$6,096,000	

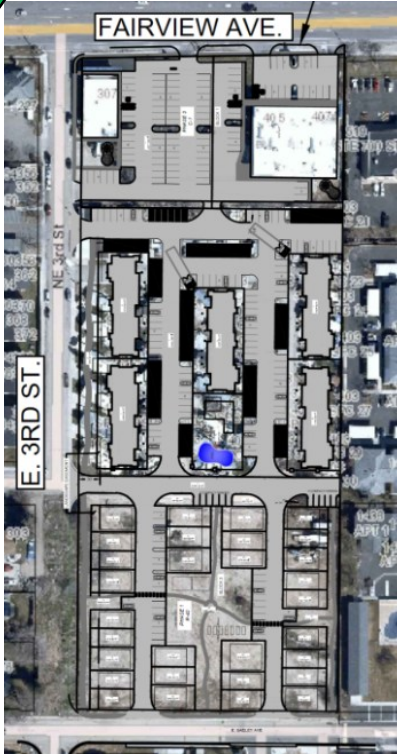
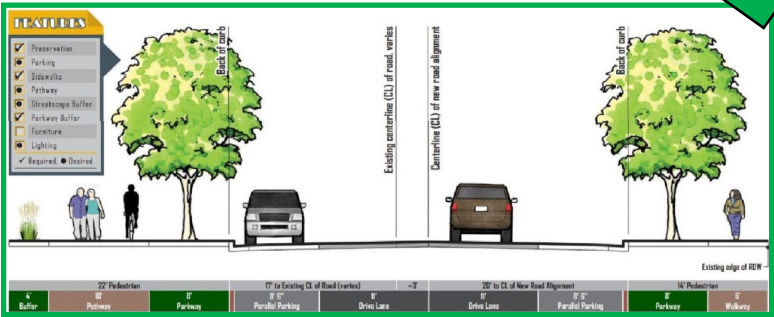


Development Impact. Since the 2008 alignment study, a recent major land use application was approved. The Promenade, is an application that includes the redevelopment of the rectangular shaped lot bounded by Fairview Avenue to the north, Bradley Avenue to the south, 3rd Street to the west, and a property line to the east that was conceived to be a 4th Street possibility. Given what was proposed by the applicant and approved by the City Council, both the 4A and 4B possibilities have been eliminated and are no longer feasible.

Important to note is that the 3rd Street cross section was required to be constructed with the application as part of required site improvements. The roadway improvement includes a 10-foot pathway on the western side of the street, an 8' parkway intended for street trees on both sides of the streets, on-street parking on either side, two 11-foot travel lanes, and a 6' walkway on the eastern side. The street segment spans from Gruber Avenue to Fairview Avenue, but does not extend to the south in the undeveloped field to Bradley. The results of the application do not change the physical landscape of the missing portions of a northerly connection but do represent an investment made by the developer of a collector-like street segment as intended as per the 2008 study.

Maps and renderings from the development application that can be found at:

[Z - Approved Findings](#)



ACHD Policies and Preferences

A collector street that provides through connectivity for a complete, one-mile section is typically subject to having traffic signals at arterial intersections. This occurs when they qualify for signals by meeting signal warrants, or when factors indicate conditions such that a traffic signal should be considered. Currently, the intersections of 3rd Street at Franklin and any intersection along the study's alignments at Fairview fail to meet conditions that create a warrant for a signal.

Even if signals meet the conditions for a warrant, that does not mean a signal must be installed or that ACHD would approve a signal. The ACHD Policy Manual includes guidance on the agency's preferences for when it will consider traffic signals.

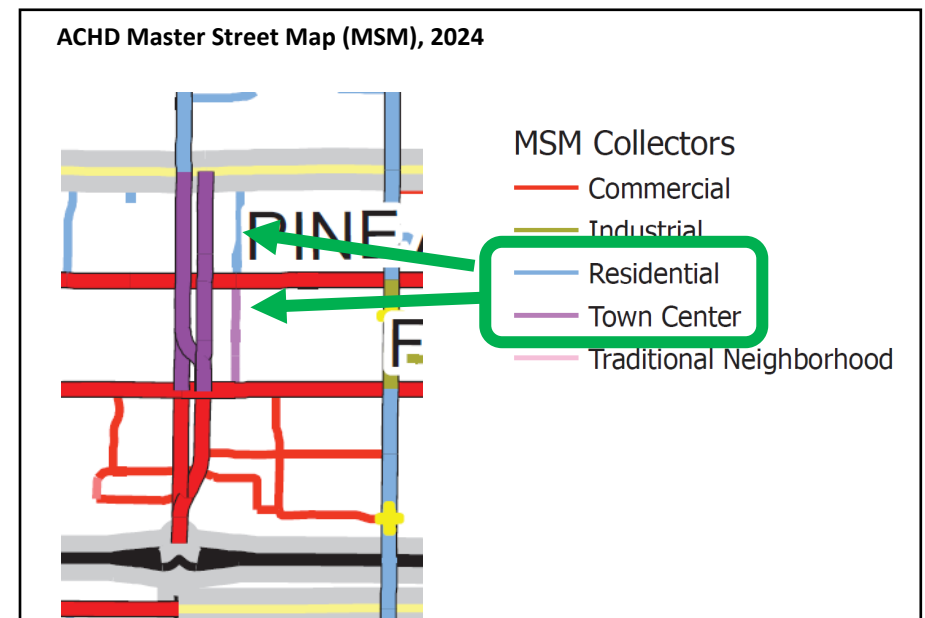
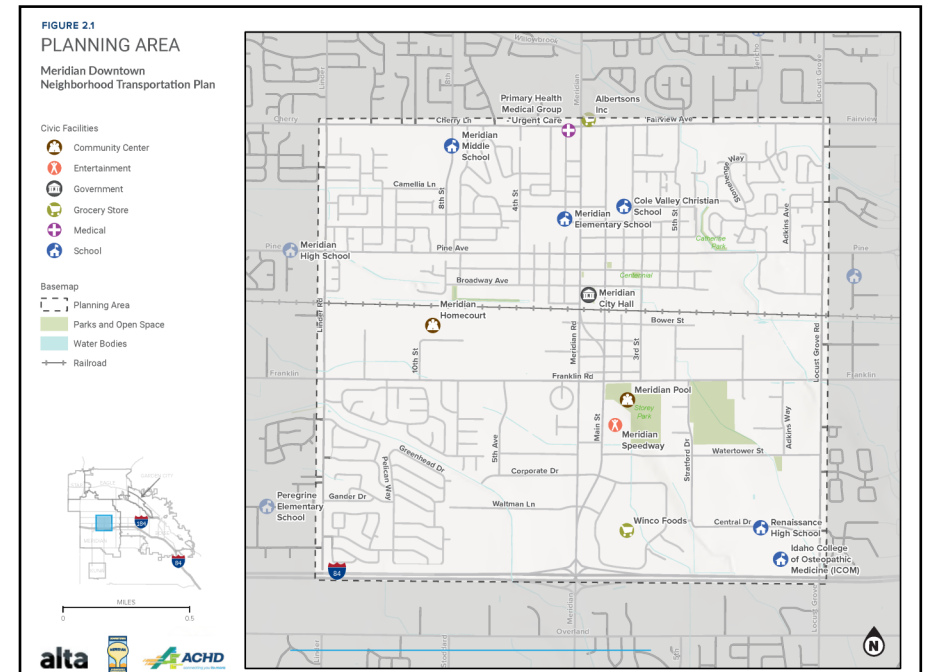
Fairview and Franklin are principal arterials, and 3rd Street is a collector (even conceptually, given a future connection at Fairview). These are designated within ACHD's Master Street Map, last updated in 2024.

There is nothing within ACHD's existing policies that prohibits traffic signals from being installed at any of the studied alignments and their intersection with Fairview. However, due to the distance from the existing signal at Main Street, signalization is not preferred. The closest alignment at 2 1/2 Street is 560 feet from Main Street, and the 3rd Street alignment is 830 feet from the Main signal.

Guidance on ACHD's preferred signal spacing on arterials is defined in Section 7200 of its Policy Manual. Several subsections of the policy describe the ideal conditions for installing a traffic signal. The "optimum spacing" for a new signal from a collector onto an arterial is one per mile or half-mile. The manual does list considerations for a spacing of less than .5 mile.

Those considerations and a description of existing and future conditions are as follows:

- To accommodate the design and layout of an existing collector street system:** Currently, the potential 3rd Street alignment is identified as a collector within ACHD's Master Street Map, based on the assumption that when it is constructed and connected, it will function as a collector street.
- Within existing central business district:** ACHD's Meridian Downtown Neighborhood Transportation Plan (2023) defines Downtown Meridian as the



area bound by I-84 on the south, Fairview/Cherry on the north, Locust Grove Road on the east, and Linder Road on the west.

3. **If specified by an adopted Corridor Study or Specific Area Plan.** The 3rd Street alignment study would best fall under the category of Corridor Study and has been the adopted alignment for 17 years.
4. **“No other reasonable site design, access or circulation alternatives, a proven necessity, and a traffic study and traffic analysis...verifies the need.”** The Main Street signal would provide another option, mainly if MDC and the City could acquire property to build a connecting local street between Main Street and 2 1/2 Street, north of Carlton. If not, then the chosen alignment could fulfill this element of ACHD’s preferred policies.

One reason none of the potential alignments meet the traffic signal warrants is that they currently lack direct connectivity. Warrants may be met in the future if a connection is constructed and redevelopment occurs, thereby creating sufficient transportation demand (motorists or other road users) to justify a signal.

Signal Spacing. One of the primary arguments for selecting the 3rd Street alignment was the possible siting of a full-access traffic signal on Fairview Avenue. The assumption over the years has been that the 2 1/2 Street intersection may be too close to the Main Street intersection for ACHD to prefer a signal so close to the Main Street signal. There are several examples of traffic signals on the ACHD arterial system the spacing of the possible alignments, and shown below.

Arterial (Major Street)	Minor Street Signals	Spacing from nearest signal
Fairview	Main St and 2 1/2 Street	530'
Fairview	Main St and 3rd Street	830'
Gowen Road	I-84 off-ramp and Eisenmann	540'
Vista Avenue	Rose Hill and Federal Way	565'
Orchard Street	Overland and Clark	660'
Curtis Road	Chinden and Ustick	665'
Eagle Road	State Highway 44 and Plaza Dr	670'

The ACHD Policy Manual sections that govern the spacing of traffic signals on an arterial roadway can be found in Section 7200. (link: [TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS](#))

Main St. 2 1/2 St. 3rd St. Lake St. Locust Grove

7205.4.2 Signalized Collector Street Intersection Spacing on Minor and Principal Arterials Minor and Principal Arterials

The optimum spacing for new signalized collector roadways intersecting minor arterials is one half-mile. In order to maintain the function of the arterial street system, the goal is to allow no more than one signal per mile (with connectivity within the square mile to that signal location). The spacing of signalized intersections on arterials is critical to traffic progression and the optimization of the arterial street system.

Deviations from the ½ mile spacing may be considered:

- To accommodate the design and layout of an existing collector street system.
- Within existing central business districts.
- If specified by an adopted Corridor Study or Specific Area Plan.
- If there are no other reasonable site design, access or circulation alternatives eliminating the need for a signal; and if there is a proven public necessity for the intersection; and a traffic signal study and traffic analysis reviewed and approved by the District verifies the need.

7205.4.3 Local Street Intersection Spacing on Arterials

New local streets should not typically intersect arterials. Local streets should typically intersect collectors. If it is necessary, as determined by ACHD, for a local street to intersect an arterial, the minimum allowable offset shall be as identified in Tables 1a and 1b below.

Table 1b: Access Spacing on Principal Arterials (away from a signalized intersection/ successive spacing)

Posted Speed Limit	Minimum Separation for Unsignalized Public Streets	Minimum Driveway Separation (right-in/right-out)
30 MPH	1,320'	355'
35 MPH	1,320'	355'
40 MPH	1,320'	400'
45 MPH	1,320'	450'
50 MPH	1,320'	520'

In discussions with ACHD staff, it was shared that neither location is preferred, even if policy doesn't strictly prohibit it. The spacing issue is compounded by the existing signalization of the Lakes Place and Fairview Avenue intersection, located east of both proposed intersections. The distance from Main Street to the Lakes Place signal is roughly .4 miles.

When signal policy, Fairview's functional classification, and typology are considered together, the potential signal locations are below ACHD's preferred arterial signal spacing. Installing another signal between Main and Lakes is not preferred due ACHD's preferences to preserve traffic flow and improve access control.

There is precedent for the ACHD Commission approving more closely spaced traffic signals, and if they don't meet warrants, that could be a topic of discussion if redevelopment in the area prompts the City and MDC to request signalization at one of the alignment intersections. This occurred most recently at the intersection of State Street and 14th Street near downtown Boise.

Other Signal Options. If a full traffic signal is not a preferred option for ACHD, the City, and MDC, there are other options to meet the goals for improved mobility in and out of downtown Meridian for non-motorized road users.

The most likely option is a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB), which is used at major street crossings with notable pedestrian and bicyclist traffic volumes. At the intersection with Fairview with whatever alignment occurs, a PHB may be suitable.

Ideally, it would include a median refuge island where the two-way left turn lane currently exists. The refuge island would be like the one farther west on Cherry Lane, connecting to the library.

The island would help improve safety not only for people who walk and bike, but for motorists, as it would prohibit left turns in and out of the eventual alignment, allowing only right turns into and out of the street. This type of access control would help preserve the traffic flow that ACHD desires and reduce turning conflicts along the route.



(Top) Existing 2 1/2 Street and Fairview intersection.

(Bottom) Example of Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon with refuge island.

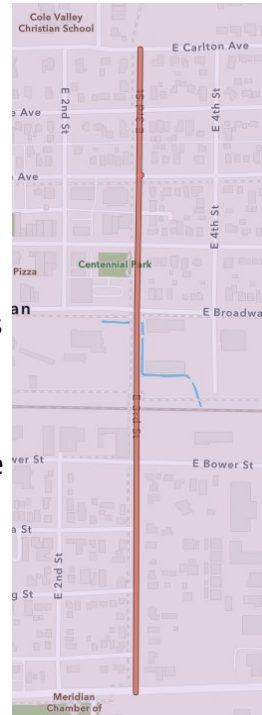
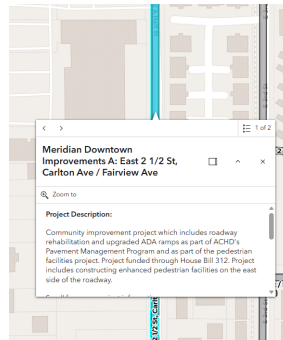
Integrated Five-Year Work Program

The ACHD Integrated Five-Year Work Plan includes projects identified for near-term action. In last year's version, two projects were included that have a direct bearing on the overall alignment consideration. However, one of the projects was removed and is not identified at all in the current adopted version, while the other remained.

[FYP Interactive Web Map 2026-2030](#)

2 1/2 Street

Pedestrian improvements are largely missing from the east side of the 2 1/2 Street section between Fairview and Washington. This project, which was removed, included new asphalt and curb ramps, leaving sidewalk gaps as the only remaining elements to complete. Given that the project was removed, it presents an opportunity for the City of Meridian to work with ACHD to expand the project's scope, including sidewalks, landscaping, and other features, before it returns into the Five-Year Plan.

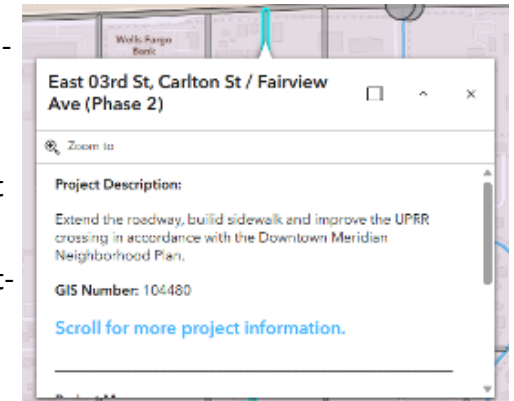


3rd Street

The 3rd Street segment from Carlton to Franklin is still in the Plan and heads to design in 2028. The project will address pedestrian and ADA facilities and is anticipated to be constructed in 2030. Once built, the 3rd Street corridor will be completed up to the 3rd Street and Carlton intersection, which is the southern edge of the alignment study.

3rd Street Extension

Finally, the actual 3rd Street Extension, the subject of this paper, is identified in the FYWP but listed only as "future considerations." At this point, it is not identified for any activity, including design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction. The segment is not included in the CIP and is not eligible for development impact fees.



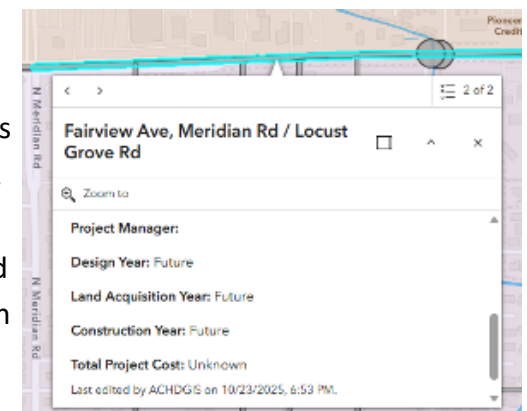
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

ACHD's CIP is the governing document for long-term roadway projects over the next two decades. Projects in the CIP are impact-fee eligible and limited to arterial streets.

Fairview Improvements

The only project in the CIP that affects the 3rd Street discussion is the widening of Fairview Avenue. The project includes an increase to seven lanes, remains unfunded and is not programmed for design or construction.

[Capital Improvement Plan | Ada County HD, ID](#)



The Making of a Corridor

The overall alignment of 2 1/2 Street from the north and 3rd Street towards the south creates a corridor that has:

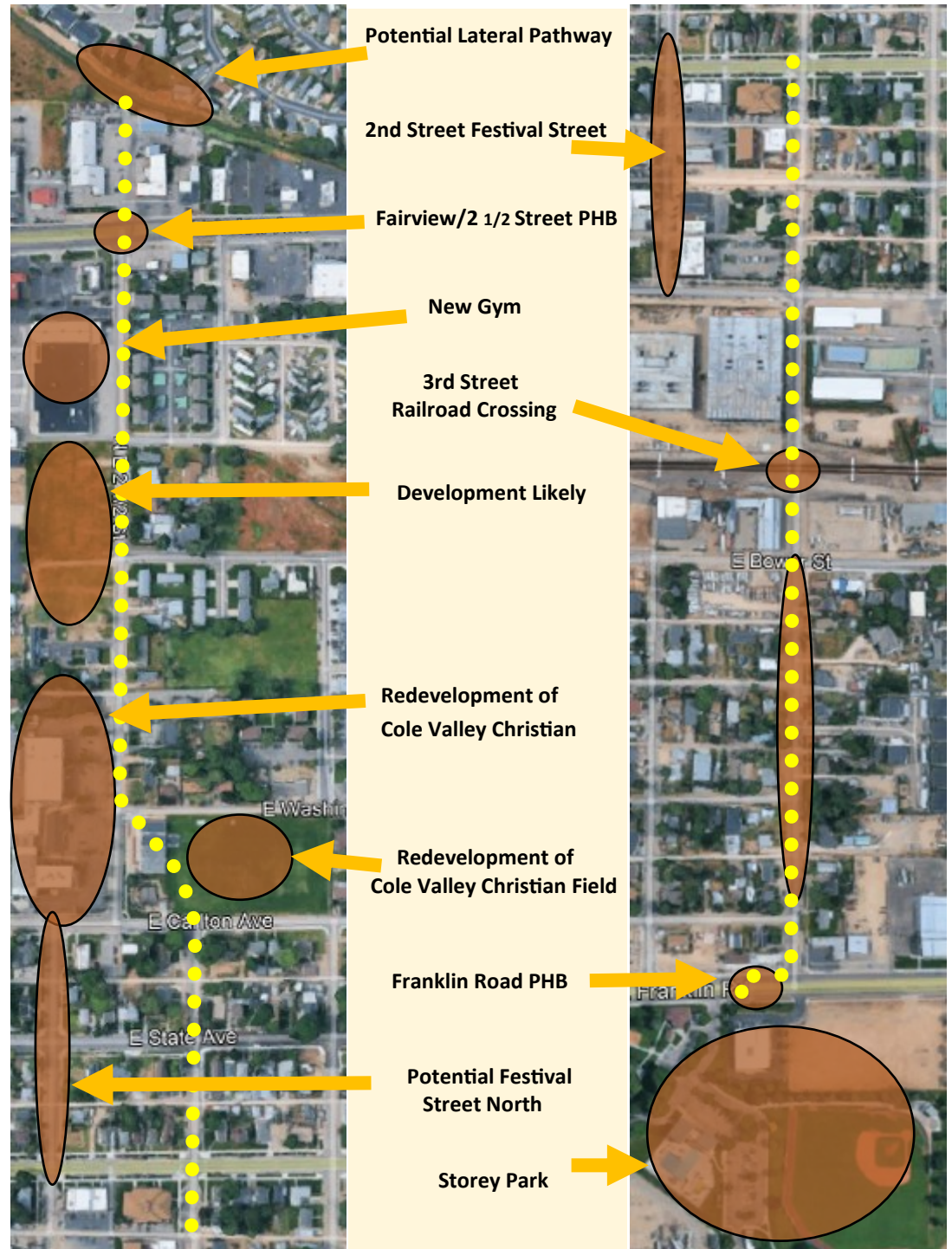
- Diverse land uses,
- Ample redevelopment opportunities,
- Existing infrastructure advantage, and
- Connections to key community assets.

From the north, the lateral pathways discussed can be accessible via a 2 1/2 Street/Fairview crossing. Just south of Fairview is a newly proposed gym that will occupy the old Rite Aid location and open undeveloped fields. South of the field is the Cole Valley Christian campus, which occupies a three-block area that will transform in the coming years. Proposed developments will likely be pedestrian-friendly and could feature design elements that take full advantage of the corridor.

All the activity to the north can be tied into a possible festival street extension of 2nd Street north of Pine, the officially planned festival street south of Pine, and the core of downtown.

South of downtown, the 3rd Street corridor includes a vital railroad crossing, a segment already improved by ACHD, the essential Franklin Road Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon crossing, and a terminus at Story Park.

The 2 1/2/3rd Street corridor has the full potential to be one of the more active neighborhood collector streets in the Valley, should the connection, redevelopment, and planned improvements align in a coordinated fashion.



Other Options

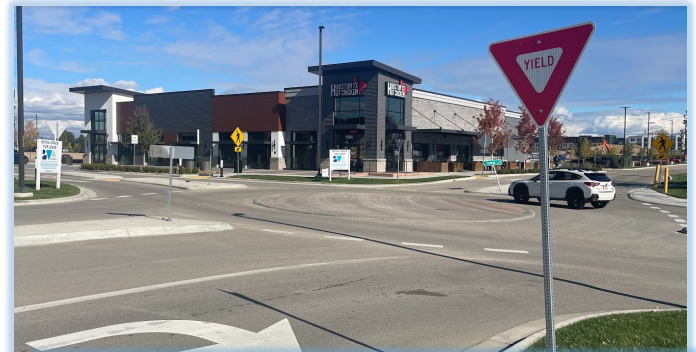
Even without a new alignment or traffic signal at Fairview, the 3rd Street corridor still offers options to fulfill the goals and intent of connecting Franklin and Fairview. This section describes other options to consider, including those that do not require new alignments. An advantage of not requiring a new alignment through the open field is reducing project costs and preserving private property for development (and property tax revenues) that would otherwise be transferred to untaxable, government use in perpetuity.

Upgrade existing streets and forego a new alignment. The redevelopment of the current Cole Valley Christian School field offers options for creating a more direct alignment. However, direct alignment is not a requirement for a functional street system in this area. Upgrading the existing 2 1/2 and 3rd Street sections to include curb, gutter, and sidewalk, as well as safer infrastructure for people who walk and bike, will still provide connectivity and mobility in the area. The intersections of Carlton at 2 1/2 Street and 3rd Street could remain in their existing configurations, with potential changes to provide all-way stop control (stop signs on all legs).

Mini roundabouts on Carlton at 2 1/2 Street and 3rd Street. If a proposal for the open field is best achieved through preserving the existing parcel, the mobility and connectivity goals for this area could be achieved by constructing mini roundabouts at the two intersections with Carlton. Mini roundabouts exist elsewhere on the ACHD system where safer mobility options were preferred, but right-of-way was limited. Mini roundabouts do not have the same large footprint as traditional roundabouts and have a center island that consists of a mountable island for the low percentage of trucks and school buses that use the route. A recent example is at the intersection of Silverston Way and Flatiron Lane in Meridian and at the intersection of Rose Hill and Owyhee in Boise.

Construct a local street connection between Main Street and 2 1/2 Street. There is no connection between Main Street and 2 1/2 Street in the 2,000 feet between Carlton Avenue and Fairview Avenue. Given the costs of upgrading potential alignments and ACHD's signal preferences for Fairview, providing a connection halfway between Carlton and Fairview would allow people using the 3rd Street corridor to access it from the signal at Main Street and Fairview. This connection would need to be defined so that future development on vacant parcels can dedicate the right-of-way and street improvements. The alignment through properties fronting Main Street would have to occur via redevelopment or MDC's purchase of the property. A new local street connection would not necessarily consume the entire parcel, so any purchase may allow resale of the parcel's remnant for development purposes.

Mini-roundabouts: Silverstone Way & Flatiron Lane in Meridian



Rose Hill Street & Owyhee Street in Boise

**Connecting Main Street to 2 1/2 Street between Carlton & Fairview
Fairview Ave**

