

To: Meridian City Council

Re: MDC *Destination: Downtown*-Human Experience

Dear Councilmembers,

Downtown Meridian can set itself apart from the other communities in the Treasure Valley through an enhancement effort unlike anything else. Maybe excellent features exist downtown today thanks to the hard work of many people. The next generation of improvements can truly captivate Meridian residents, downtown visitors, local employees, and property owners alike. Within the *Destination: Downtown* document, several elements were examined and suggested, including:

Downtown Gateway Features

Lighting Enhancements

- Intersection and Walkways
- Projection and Accent Lighting
- Seasonal/Holiday Lighting
- Artistic Lighting

The Sounds of Downtown

- Music
- Walkway Sounds

Shade Elements

- Trees
- Awnings and Shade Sails

Public Art Features

- Street Enhancement Art
- Murals
- The People Who Made Meridian
- The Buildings That Made Meridian

The work session will provide an overview of this element of the Plan. The discussion is for illustrative purposes, given the endless possibilities of features that can be pursued that may fall into each category. Taking the lead on implementing these projects would fall to MDC. Enhancing downtown is within the general purpose of the Development Corporation's mission and abilities. However, like all elements of the Plan, the intent and spirit is to partner and collaborate with the City of Meridian, the Meridian Chamber of Commerce, and the property and business owners within downtown.



Future Downtown

- Unique Features
- Placemaking
- Dynamic Lighting
- Gateway Treatments
- Public Art
- Honor History
- Murals
- Music and Sounds
- Seasonal
- Holiday

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.

Gateways

The gateway concept aims to provide people with a sense of place. The purpose is to establish entry points into downtown Meridian and give the overall geography a stronger identity. As visitors, residents, and workers enter downtown from any of the four primary entrances, they will know they have reached a different space from the rest of Meridian and see the shift in development and design, while also increasing their expectations for people on foot, a need to slow down if driving, and to feel the numerous elements that make downtown feel so special.

Gateway treatments can include a variety of features, such as a gateway arch spanning the top of a street. When selecting a gateway feature, consider the immediate context of adjacent land uses and the scale of the entrance. The most significant movement of people into downtown is likely through the gateway entrance at Main & Franklin, or in the vicinity of the Meridian Speedway. In either case, the opportunity to capture visitors' attention with a distinctive gateway exists and can be something highly unique. The next two major gateways are likely those located at the opposite end of the corridor off Fairview/Cherry. These gateways can be viewed as either one or two, and they also present an opportunity to welcome people into the town. The last of the major gateways is that within Old Town. Despite people already being in the overall downtown vicinity, the Old Town blocks bring another unique environment worthy of another treatment. The downtown within downtown, if you will, can help welcome people, honor history, and further define the oldest portions of the city of Meridian.

For the east-west entrances, both located on Pine Avenue, more modest gateway treatments are used, allowing them to continue welcoming people into downtown, albeit on a smaller scale than the more robust entrances at the north and south entrances and in Old Town. In these instances, a pedestal sign, ornamental artwork, or a smaller, identical version of a larger gateway treatment can be used.

Ultimately, gateway treatments should be weighed heavily given their community prominence and the likelihood that each treatment will be in place for a generation or more.

Downtown Gateway Entrances



Image: Rick Mouser



Image: Vitruvian Planning

Lighting Enhancements

The way downtown is lit can set the tone for the overall experience. With great lighting that is imaginative and thoughtful, people can feel captivated and excited. Without solid lighting, dark places are created, translating into a nervous and intimidating feeling. People seek fun and festive energy, particularly after working hours and on week-ends, or during special occasions and holidays. Lighting can play a major role in addressing all these human needs and should be a major feature in downtown Meridian.

Intersection and Walkways - lighting that doubles as a safety feature to illuminate pedestrians in thoroughfares and street crossings.

Projection and Accent Lighting - Lighting directed onto building façades or on the out-sides of structures meant to complement nearby areas.

Seasonal/Holiday Lighting - Lighting that can change or adjust according to the time of year and coincide with major celebrations. String lighting is now fully programmable and can be used for events annually.

Artistic Lighting - This lighting would be part of an art installation and intended to use the medium of light as its focal point.

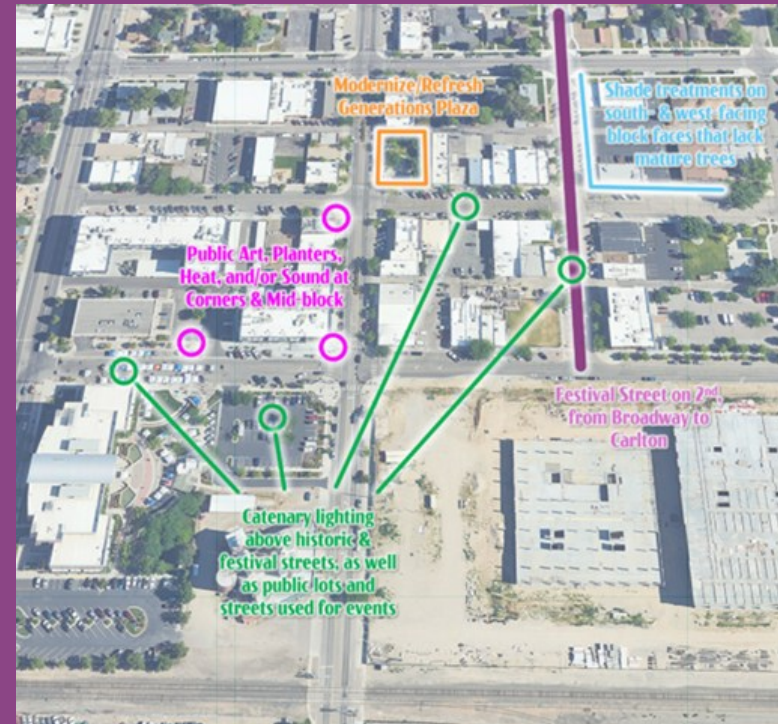
The Sounds of Downtown

Much like lighting, sound is one of the fundamental senses that penetrates. Sounds can set a mood, provide a calming effect, and work in conjunction with lighting displays to create an intended environment and ambiance. Downtown Meridian can set a gold standard using different sounds, unlike its area counterparts, with:

Music - Except for Indian Creek in Caldwell and the Grove Plaza in Boise, very few places use music as much as possible. Whether through a PA system established throughout downtown, or located within traffic cabinets, a variety of ways are likely to use music and its power to further enhance downtown Meridian.

Walkway Sounds - Walkway sounds can be installed using detection tools such as motion detectors, radar beams, and other mechanisms, which can increase awareness of pedestrians and add an element of personal safety.

Downtown Enhancement Areas



Examples of street lighting, façade lighting,, music at traffic signal cabinets from Nashville, and speakers mounted for Music on Main Street in Bristol, TN.

Shade Elements

The summer months in Meridian can be extremely hot, and walking through the downtown streets can be a challenge. Shade can cool walking surfaces by more than 30 degrees, chill the surrounding air, and provide a respite for pedestrians. Providing shade is no longer solely the domain of trees, though street trees offer significant value beyond casting shadows. Combining treatments will help ensure visits downtown in the summer, give comfort to walkers, reduce cooling expenses, and add to a positive atmosphere.

Trees - Street trees not only cast shade, but also filter ambient air, filter stormwater, calm traffic, and prolong the life of asphalt. Street trees are an essential component of downtown, and adding to the downtown canopy would yield significant benefits.

Awnings and Shade Sails - Beyond Street trees, other approaches to shade continue to grow in popularity. The use of shade sails in public sitting areas and awnings for gathering spaces not only cast shade but can also protect from rain and snow.

Public Art Features

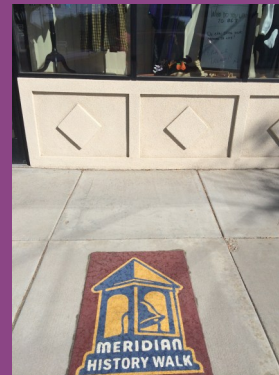
Art is an inherently human expression. Celebrating local culture, honoring history, or stoking the imagination, art —specifically public art —can be transcendent. Adding different forms of public art throughout downtown is another human element worth considering.

Street Enhancement Art - Modest pieces located within pedestrian areas, within landscape medians, and in public realms.

Murals - Larger projects, often paintings but increasingly digital, that use the sides of buildings or large walls, often without architectural features otherwise.

The People Who Made Meridian - Honoring the many people who worked to make Meridian into what it is today. Much like the Anacortes mural project (<https://www.anacorteswa.gov/1222/Bill-Mitchell-and-the-Anacortes-Mural-Pr>) Meridian can celebrate the lives of contributing locals through the realm of public art.

The Buildings That Made Meridian - Like the people of Meridian, celebrating the places and structures that made the city is also a worthy endeavor. The History Walk celebrates the structures that remain, while those that no longer exist can still be honored through paintings, augmented reality, or other media.



Shade treatments (Ketchum), landscape street art in Salt Lake, the Meridian History walk, mural examples, bike rack art in Coeur d'Alene, roundabout art in Bend, and the Anacortes Mural project that celebrates locals through imagery.