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To: Mayor Simison and the Meridian City Council

From: Ashley Squyres, Administrator

Date: July 14, 2025

RE: Destination: Downtown Master Plan Update

In the late 2000s, the Meridian Development Corporation (the Agency) and the Meridian City Council (the Council) shared a strategic vision for revitalizing downtown Meridian. The decision to locate and construct the new City Hall in the heart of downtown was a clear and deliberate signal of the City's commitment to investing in and strengthening its urban core.

One of the key outcomes of numerous early discussions was the recognition of a need for a comprehensive vision document to guide redevelopment efforts within the urban renewal district. In response, the Agency issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in early 2009. A contract was awarded that summer, leading to the development of the *Destination: Downtown Master Plan*, which was formally adopted by both the Meridian Development Corporation (the Agency) and the Meridian City Council in early 2010. As part of this adoption, the City Council incorporated the *Destination: Downtown Master Plan* into the City's Comprehensive Plan by reference—a reference that remains in place today.

The original plan divided the urban renewal district into six (6) planning areas:

- Northern Gateway
- Washington and Main
- Traditional City Core
- Neighborhood Preservation
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)/Cultural District
- Southern Gateway

In addition to these geographic focus areas, the plan was organized around four (4) central themes:

- Livability
- Mobility
- Prosperity
- Sustainability

Over the past 15 years, the *Destination: Downtown Master Plan* has served as a guiding document for both the Agency and the City Council when considering projects within the district. Like the Comprehensive Plan, it is intended as a visioning tool—not a prescriptive document.

In 2021, the Agency and City Economic Development staff, initiated conversations about the need to update the plan. Factors prompting this discussion included the de-annexation of a portion of the original urban renewal district, the formation of the Union and Northern Gateway Districts, and evolving conditions within downtown Meridian. These developments made it clear that a timely update to the plan was both necessary and appropriate.

Following coordination with the City's Community Development Director and staff, as well as input from City Councilors and a thorough discussion by the Agency's Board, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was issued in June 2022. The RFQ was jointly reviewed by both the Agency and City representatives to ensure alignment on priorities and scope prior to its release.

The Agency and the City identified and agreed upon five (5) key study areas to be addressed:

- Update of the original *Destination: Downtown Master Plan*
- Comprehensive downtown parking study
- Creation of Downtown Design Guidelines
- Update of the 2015 Multi-Purpose Conference Center Study
- Recommendations for potential new urban renewal districts

In September and October 2022, members of the Agency Board, City Council, and selected downtown stakeholders participated in interviews with the consultant teams that responded to the RFQ. Based on the interview committee's scoring and feedback, Vitruvian Planning was awarded the contract by the Agency in October 2022.

The kickoff for the updated *Destination: Downtown Master Plan* occurred in November 2022. Work proceeded throughout 2023 and 2024, incorporating input gathered through stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and standing committees focused on key topic areas. This process was supported by ongoing collaboration between the consultant team, Agency staff, and City staff.

In August 2024, the Agency formally adopted the updated plan. A presentation was then delivered to the City Council by the consultant in November 2024, marking a significant milestone in the project.

From the outset, it has been the clear intention and goal of this effort for the City Council to adopt the updated master plan and formally replace the existing version currently referenced in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Downtown Meridian has experienced considerable change, and the growing pressures on infrastructure—particularly related to parking—necessitate a clear, actionable framework to guide future development and investment decisions.

The Agency recognizes that there may be concerns or proposed modifications to the updated plan as presented. These possibilities were anticipated as part of the process, and we welcome the opportunity to engage in a series of work-sessions with the City Council to discuss these items in greater detail and ensure alignment in vision moving forward.