

MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



July 17, 2026

TO: Historic Preservation Commission
CC: Cassandra Schiffler, Arts & Culture Coordinator
FROM: Brian McClure, Long Range Planning Supervisor
RE: Downtown Overlay and Standards Project

The Meridian City Council has directed staff to pursue a Downtown Zoning Overlay and related update to the City's Architectural Standards Manual. This project will include three components: adoption of code provisions enabling zoning overlays; creation of the Downtown Overlay zoning district; and updates to the City's Architectural Standards Manual to incorporate the Overlay and establish downtown-specific express design standards. This work is an outcome of the ongoing coordination between City Council and the Meridian Development Corporation, the City's Urban Renewal Agency.

The first component, development of code provisions enabling the use of zoning overlays, is largely complete and pending either a stand-alone code amendment or inclusion with the broader project approval. The second component, the Downtown Overlay itself, is more complex, defining the additional standards that apply within the overlay district. Current work focuses on unifying elements of site and architectural design review, with particular emphasis on the public realm. The geography of the overlay is generally aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The third component is an update to the express standards within the ASM. Express standards are objective and measurable, rather than relying primarily on discretionary review. The area of application for these new architectural standards would be around what is sometimes known as the City Core (see attachment), with most of the larger overlay focusing on the public realm.

Downtown functions as a single place, yet its current design standards vary by underlying zoning district, often changing several times within a single block. The proposed update instead organizes standards around the character and function of downtown, rather than strictly parcel-by-parcel zoning-based standards. While the standards will remain objective and measurable, staff intend to develop them in a manner that respects Meridian's historic character while supporting continued investment and evolution of downtown.

City staff will be keeping the Commission apprised of the project status. Commissioner Johnston has agreed to participate on the project's Technical Working Group, and staff will continue coordinating with Cassandra throughout the project.

Attachments:

1. Project Area Map

