

Interim Committee on Urban Renewal in Idaho

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Please consider the following recommendations for improvements to the URD enabling legislation.

Mission

The mission of the URDs needs clarity. What was formerly the elimination of “blight” has now become a generic “economic development”.

Accountability

The current URD law allows taxation without representation. The law should be changed to bring spending under the authority of the city council OR the URD Board should be elected rather than appointed.

Allowable Expenditures

The law is in need of a more concise definition of where URD funds can be applied. Presently funds can be spent on an overly broad range of items including rent and public art. Art is in the eye of the beholder and spending public tax dollars to fund a giant fork sculpture does not benefit the general public, only those with a fetish for oversized cutlery.

Forbidden Activities

No URD should be allowed to conduct or operate a business in such a way as to compete directly with the private sector. For example, URDs should not be allowed to own rental properties in competition with privately owned rental properties.

URDs should be forbidden from conducting public relations campaigns. To use public funds to convince the public you are wisely spending their funds is an oxymoron. The URD should be known by the work it does, not the work it claims to do.

Alternative “Boardless” Urban Renewal

URDs in their present manifestation would be eliminated and replaced the authority at the city council level to establish an urban renewal district. Inside the district, property values for taxation purposes would be frozen for a period of years (10-20). In this way, developers would be attracted to blighted areas for new development. No Boards or additional overhead would be required.