



MERIDIAN
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October 29, 2015

The Honorable Dan G. Johnson, Co-Chairman
The Honorable Rick D. Youngblood, Co-Chairman
The Honorable Jeff C. Siddoway
The Honorable Kathleen Sims
The Honorable Chuck Winder
The Honorable Robert Anderst
The Honorable Mary Souza
The Honorable Lance Clow
The Honorable Maryanne Jordan
The Honorable Hy Kloc

Dear Interim Committee Members:

The Meridian Development Corporation (MDC) is pleased to provide you with our Board's thoughts and insights on Urban Renewal in Idaho, and specifically within MDCs boundaries.

The MDC was established by Resolution No. 01-367 of the City Council of the City of Meridian, Idaho and adopted on July 24, 2001 to function as the City's urban renewal agency. It is an independent agency, authorized under the authority of the Idaho Urban Renewal Law of 1965, as amended, Chapter 20, Title 50, Idaho Code. To date, MDC has not incurred any outstanding bond obligations and, in fact, has opted to "pay as you go" utilizing only a line of credit with one of our local banking partners. To date, this line of credit has not been utilized.

MDC is governed by a nine-member Board of Commissioners who are appointed by the Mayor and City Council for rotating three-year terms. The Board meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30am and on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 4pm.

Public participation in Board meetings is invited and encouraged. Agendas and minutes are posted on the MDC website in advance of each meeting and each year MDC follows the letter of Idaho Code with respect to the public notices and meetings, whereby citizens have the opportunity to provide their thoughts and input to our Board.

MDC is committed to the economic stimulation and expansion of Downtown Meridian into a thriving area that provides opportunities in which to live, work, and play. Renewal and redevelopment will be supported through strategic use of resources to create successful projects that will attract and serve the people of Meridian.

With this as a backdrop, we wish to provide the interim committee with some of our Board's thoughts and recommendations regarding the process you are currently undertaking on behalf of the Idaho Legislature.

Local Control

The MDC is a staunch supporter of, and proponent for, local control. The Board has found that over time, the best plans come to fruition as we are empowered to work with the local agency partners and citizen groups in order to reach agreement on the activities that have been proposed in our plan. The flexibility that our Board has to work with these groups is one of the core reasons we have seen the success that we have within the MDC boundaries.

Any effort to curtail local control should be met with skepticism. At the state level, Idaho has a proud and successful tradition of fighting against federal mandates. As a result, our state has allowed these deeply held principles to remain active between the state and local governments. MDC would encourage you to resist the efforts of any top down control models for Urban Renewal.

Modernization of Urban Renewal

The MDC participated last summer in the fact-finding trip to Salt Lake City to understand how their system works and what reform Utah has implemented. Of particular interest to MDC is the concept of creating separate plan areas, one for the traditional deteriorated/deteriorating areas and another for economic development projects. Both of these plan areas should still rely on tax increment financing to accomplish their objectives, unless of course, the legislature provides other means of financing not currently available.

Board Composition

The MDC currently has two elected officials from the City on the Board with the remaining members being non-elected volunteers with specific skill sets and expertise in areas that the MDC regularly engages in. The elected officials on the board do not serve in leadership roles for the agency but rather, as two of nine seats. Our Board does not support requiring its members to be elected to this Board. Membership on a Board should continue to be all inclusive of those residents who reside anywhere within the county or city of which the district is located.

Public Private Partnerships

MDC supports the continued collaboration between public and private entities for project development. Urban Renewal Agencies should continue to have at their disposal all the necessary tools to work collaboratively with private entities. Without this, Urban Renewal Agencies would face significant hurdles to redevelopment of blighted areas as well as the incentives to attract new businesses in areas slated for economic development and job creation.

Consolidation of Reporting Requirements

Annual Reports

MDC believes the timeline for filing its annual reports is satisfactory. MDC is required to adopt its previous year's annual report by March 31 of each year. MDC traditionally adopts the annual report during one of the March meetings and then files it on record with the city clerk's office. Following this, MDC then schedules a presentation with the Meridian City Council, which is open to the public, in April. MDC will then publish the Annual Report on its website.

Audits

MDC is required to finalize its audit for the previous fiscal year by December 31. MDC believes this is appropriate timing. MDC closes out its books for the fiscal year by the end of October each year, and our audit typically occurs during the first week of November. Following the audit, MDC will adopt the findings at the first meeting in December at a meeting that is open to the public. MDC will then publish the audit on its website.

Budgets

MDC believes the ideal timing for budgets should be in line with the other taxing districts, which is September 15 of each year. However, despite the difference in budget dates for MDC and other districts, MDC has not encountered any issues with respect to publishing the hearing the dates for the budget hearings. MDC actively promotes its budget work-sessions to the public and MDCs partners.

MDC appreciates the opportunity to provide the interim committee with its thoughts and recommendations on how to improve aspects of an already exceptional and well-thought out public policy.

Thank you and MDC looks forward to reviewing your recommendations in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Jim Escobar
MDC Chairman

Cc: Board Members