



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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December 14, 2015

To: Members of the Legislative Interim Committee on Urban Renewal

Senator Dan Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Doug Siddoway
Senator Mary Souza
Senator Chuck Winder
Senator Maryanne Jordan

Representative Rick Youngblood, Co-Chair
Representative Robert Anderst
Representative Lance Clow
Representative Kathleen Sims
Representative Hy Kloc

Dear Senator Johnson, Representative Youngblood and Committee Members:

The City of Garden City appreciates the time and effort Committee members have dedicated to reviewing urban renewal and its impact on local governments and the State of Idaho. As you have determined, this is a complex issue that is of significant importance to cities across our state. In our case, our ability to utilize urban renewal has turned a deteriorating older part of the city into one of our fastest growing areas. This is creating substantial value to every resident in the city as the area continues to generate more economic value.

At the beginning of your review, we were assured by Legislative leaders that the goal of the committee was to enhance urban renewal and “Do No Harm”. We appreciated that pledge then and now. With that in mind, we respectively offer the following as you continue your deliberations and develop possible new legislation:

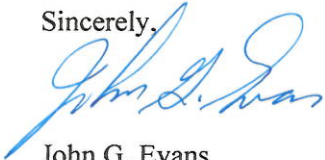
- *Maintain local government’s ability to appoint and remove members of urban renewal agency boards.* This is particularly important for smaller cities, such as ours, that often have a difficult time finding citizens to serve on committees or boards. To require someone to run for an unpaid position on an urban renewal agency places an unfair burden on our cities and our citizens. Agency commissioners should also not be term limited, as virtually no position in Idaho government has term limits and, again, it is unfair to smaller cities with limited resources.
- *Allow agencies to maintain flexibility in their plans.* Every city is different and one size does not fit all when it comes to curing blight and generating economic development. No one has a crystal ball that can predict today what will happen tomorrow. New opportunities present themselves, requiring a change in priorities and plans. Our agencies need the flexibility to respond to those opportunities in rapidly changing environments. Agencies also need the ability to utilize funds for a wide variety of projects that may be specific to their community needs. What cures blight or creates economic growth in Garden City may be far different from what accomplishes those goals in Moscow, Driggs or Post Falls.
- *Resetting the plan base could be devastating to urban renewal efforts.* Agency planning is dependent on a stable financial base. Forcing a reset of the base when plan changes or amendments are made would drastically reduce an agency’s ability to finance projects. Certainly no lender or bondholder would be interested in financing a project without a predictable revenue stream. This would also place an undue burden on county assessors who must assess each parcel separately.

- *Increases in transparency should be encouraged.* Garden City is committed to transparency in government and we support efforts to encourage more interactions between cities, their urban renewal agencies and their citizens. Assuring that agency agendas, minutes, plans and financial information are readily available to all stakeholders should be a priority for everyone. Additional meetings between local city officials and urban renewal agency commissioners assure that plans and projects are in the best interests of the community. Our urban renewal agency reports its activities to the Mayor and Council regularly during the calendar year, beyond the minimum requirements under the statute. Additionally, with two members of the Agency board as city council members, the elected officials are informed as to agency activities. Finally, any agency project goes through the formal approval process required by the City similar to any other entity seeking approval.
- *Retain local government's most significant and viable economic development tool.* Unlike Utah and other states, Idaho does not provide multiple tools for local governments to use for economic improvement and development. Urban Renewal and TIF are virtually the only means we have to improve our deteriorating infrastructure, to cure blight, to encourage new development and to recruit new businesses and jobs to our communities.
- *Allow local government to determine their projects.* Micro management by the state legislature of specific projects should be discouraged. Similar to the state's opposition to federal micro management of state assets and operations, we encourage the Committee to avoid further restrictions on local government's ability to respond to needs in their communities.

In summary, we appreciate the opportunity to continue providing useful information to the Committee as it determines its next steps and recommendations. And we also appreciate your pledge to "Do No Harm" as you go through this process. Please feel free to contact us if you need any further information.

Again, thank you for your time and your service.

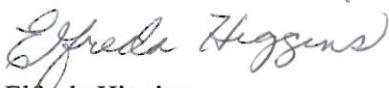
Sincerely,



John G. Evans
Mayor



Pam Beaumont
City Council President



Elfreda Higgins
Council Member



William Mitchell
Council Member



Jeff Souza
Council Member