



Heart of the Arts

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March 22, 2016

Senator Jeff Siddoway, Chair
Senator Jim Guthrie, Vice Chair
Senator Curt McKenzie
Senator Dan Johnson
Senator Jim Rice
Senator Steve Vick
Senator Clifford Bayer
Senator Michelle Stennett
Senator Grant Burgoyne

RE: House Bill 606A

Dear Honorable Chairman Siddoway and Members of the Senate Local Government & Taxation Committee:

On behalf of the City of Moscow, I would like to thank you for the time and effort you are investing in consideration of urban renewal in Idaho. Your thoughtful consideration of House Bill 606A and previous legislation is appreciated.

As you continue your deliberations, I am writing to urge you to retain flexibility in the judicious use of the urban renewal tool by allowing an amendment which would allow urban renewal plans created after July 1, 2016 to be amended in order to take advantage of economic development opportunities that had not been anticipated when the urban renewal plan was adopted.

In the City of Moscow, urban renewal has been extremely valuable in our economic development efforts.

- Alturas Technology Park was established in 1996 as Moscow's first urban renewal district and is home to many of Moscow's premier high-tech companies, including Comtech EF Data Corporation, Alturas Analytics, Inc., Anatek Labs, Inc., and BioTracking, LLC. The project had a base annual assessment of \$6.4 million, and improvements and private developments made possible through the plan have increased property values to more than \$22 million. We were fortunate enough to be able to close the revenue allocation area a year ahead of the schedule and allow the incremental tax revenues to return to the taxing districts.

Alturas provides an important example of how providing the amendment as stated is crucial to the ability of urban renewal to achieve the best outcome for our community. Nine years after adoption of the Alturas Park Urban Renewal Plan, the plan was amended to accommodate the need for additional building lots for technology based businesses, continuing the initial success of Alturas Technology Park. The amendment allowed Alturas Analytics, a pharmaceutical testing firm and spin-off of Anatek Labs, to construct a new building for its operations. Although the principal of Alturas Analytics recognizes that the firm would be more accessible to customers if located in the San Francisco area, they have elected to expand their business significantly in



Alturas Park, providing additional high-paying jobs and brings money from outside of the state to Idaho.

- The Legacy Crossing Urban Renewal District was created in June of 2008, as Moscow's second urban renewal district, and with the early closure of Alturas, it's only remaining urban renewal district. This district's formation resulted from the community's desire to eliminate deteriorated conditions. The goal of the district is to spur transition underdeveloped properties to new uses, thereby enhancing private investment and supporting the City's economic growth.

This district is in a former agriculture/industrial railroad corridor located between Moscow's historic downtown and the University of Idaho campus. The Legacy Crossing District covers approximately 163 acres and includes a number of underutilized and deteriorated properties (former industrial and railroad right-of-way) located between Moscow's historic downtown and the University of Idaho. A number of projects are currently underway or in the planning stages, including Gritman Medical Office Building, Sangria Downtown LLC (restaurant, residential and mixed use), Field Holdings (residential and mixed use) and several others. We expect increased development activity in the District over the next several years as a result of the implementation of the Legacy Crossing Urban Renewal Plan.

Urban renewal remains one of the most viable tools for local government to work to enhance our state and local economies. Given our economic development goals and the important role urban renewal plays in making that development a reality, these urban renewal projects continue to provide the only means available for our state and local governments to remain competitive.

Please let me know if I can answer any further questions. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the State of Idaho in our desire to increase economic opportunities for our citizens. Please allow us to retain the flexibility in the urban renewal laws in order to compete effectively in the economic marketplace and continue to do our part to strengthen the great State of Idaho.

Sincerely,

Bill Lambert
Mayor

c: Moscow City Council
Gary J. Riedner, City Supervisor
Seth Grigg, Association of Idaho Cities