

# Weiser Community Review

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March 12-13, 2002

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## Preface

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This document provides an overview of the Weiser Community Review as experienced by a group of community development professionals from March 12-13, 2002 and in the subsequent months that followed. Its purpose is to describe some of the many observations, interviews, conversations, ideas, visions, hopes, and perspectives recorded throughout the process. It is our sincere hope that this information be digested, discussed, and used as a catalyst for continued community development in Weiser and the surrounding region.

This report does not represent all of the ideas and opinions of Weiser's diverse community residents, and it does not hold all of the answers. It does contain some practical suggestions. Please take what you can use, prioritize the next steps and find community consensus, take action, celebrate the small victories, and leave the rest. Weiser's forward progress and vision of the future will be determined by the will, commitment, planning, and communication of those in the community who assume a leadership role and motivate others to action behind a shared vision. Please call on the members of the visiting team, your partners in community building, as necessary in the future to support your efforts. Our goal is to increase the wealth and vitality of Weiser and the surrounding region.



**Home and visiting team members pause for a photo outside the Star Theater**

The document is divided into four main sections:

Part One, *Introduction and Overview*, contains a brief description of the Community Review process and participants, why the review was requested, a brief overview of the community, its history and goals, and the approximate value of the in-kind donations made by Visiting Team members.

Part Two, *Team Reports*, presents the heart of the review with a closer look at the requested focus areas. This section reflects the thoughts of the content experts in Land Use Planning, Local Economic Development, and Civic Life and Community Involvement, as well as some ideas for positive change.

Part Three, *Community Surveys, Interviews, and Additional Resources*, holds additional information related to the review such as survey data and community interviews, a collection of tools and additional

resources such as the community and economic development, business retention, and quality of life survey, and additional resource recommendations.



**Civic life team members interact with citizens at a Senior Center luncheon**

Part Four, *Appendix*, holds visiting team member bios and contact information, news articles pertaining to the community review, and the community review schedule.

Thanks so much to the Weiser community for your willingness to share ideas and information with the visiting team, and for keeping an open mind as you evaluate the resource ideas and information from the outside pairs of eyes represented by the community development professionals who visited your community. For more information about this document or the Idaho Community Review process, contact Michael Shaw at the Association of Idaho Cities: 1-800-344-8594, (208) 850-7494, or [Mshaw@idahocities.org](mailto:Mshaw@idahocities.org).



## Introduction and Overview

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On March 12-13, 2002, the City of Weiser hosted 23 community development professionals as part of the Idaho Community Review. The visiting team's aim was to listen, observe and engage in dialogue with local leaders and residents about their community, its challenges, strengths and potential. Ultimately, the process should provide useful tools and perspective as Weiser charts a course for its economic future, land use planning, and strategic vision. The Community Review is a collaborative project spearheaded by the Association of Idaho Cities, the Idaho Department of Commerce, the Idaho Rural Partnership, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, the University of Idaho, and Idaho Housing & Finance Association.

The Community Review program goals are to provide objective recommendations and resources, and to supplement Weiser's effort in developing and implementing local community development strategies. Weiser's community leaders are commended for their willingness to engage in this challenging process, to share all aspects of their community, and for remaining open to feedback, information and ideas from the visiting team.

With the exception of public survey data and interview results, the perspectives contained in this document represent the personal observations and perceptions of Visiting Team members based on their interactions with Home Team members, Weiser residents and community leaders. Every community is complex and dynamic, with many layers, issues and facets. Visiting Team comments in no way mean to characterize or define Weiser categorically; they simply reflect a discrete point in time in which visitors interacted with participating community members and toured the community. We hope that this document serves to generate thoughtful reflection, discussion, and facilitates progressive action that benefits the entire community.

### **Weiser Review Team Makeup and Contributions**

Visiting Team members are a diverse mix of professionals from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Team composition included federal, state, and local government representatives, trainers and facilitators, and community leaders with years of experience in housing, economics, labor, small business development and planning, and private consulting. All of the visitors' time was donated to the community for this effort, including travel and lodging costs. As strong and committed partners in the process, the City of Weiser, Washington County Economic Development Commission, Chamber of Commerce, and other community and civic groups contributed meeting rooms at the Vendome and other locations, refreshments and meals for all participants, and the most valuable resource of all: time.

The total estimated (in-kind) value of this review to the community of Weiser is \$23,000, reflecting approximately \$355 per day per visiting team member along with other preparation and follow-up time. Cost per day is based on average salaries (plus benefits), travel, lodging and per diem costs contributed by visiting team members and associated organizations. In addition to the actual community review itself, some planning team coordinators spent weeks coordinating the review, conducted numerous site visits, compiled and analyzed the data, and produced the follow-up report.

This significant investment represents an in-kind match toward a community's planning efforts and should be an incentive for community leaders and residents to make the best possible use of the Review process and this report. The outcome is equivalent to hiring a 23-member consulting firm.

The key Team Members for the Weiser Review included the following individuals: For background and contact information, see the attached Team Roster in the appendix.

## Visiting Team

### Planning Team

<b>Bob Ford</b>	Manager/Business Services	Idaho Dept of Commerce
<b>Michael Shaw</b>	Human Rights Coordinator	Association of Idaho Cities
<b>Erik Kingston</b>	Housing Resources Coordinator	Idaho Housing & Finance Association
<b>Brian Dale</b>	Community Builder	US Dept of Housing & Urban Development
<b>Dwight Johnson</b>	IRP Interim Executive Director	Idaho Dept of Labor
<b>James Nelson</b>	Ag., Economic & Rural Sociology Dept.	University of Idaho
<b>Dick Gardner</b>	Consultant	Bootstrap Consulting
<b>Jim Birdsall</b>	Consultant	Birdsall & Associates

### Local Economic Development

<b>William Stewart</b>	Executive Director	Valley Vision 2001
<b>Jim Hogge</b>	State Director	Idaho Small Business Development Center
<b>Leslie Toombs</b>	Planner	Sage Community Resources
<b>Daryl Moser</b>	Director of Business/Cooperative Svcs.	U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>Lisa Wolfe</b>	Enterprise Facilitator	WA Adams Vision for Entrepreneurship
<b>Maria Aguilar</b>	Employment & Training Consultant	Idaho Migrant Council

### Land Use Planning

<b>John Bertram</b>	Consultant	Planmakers Planning & Urban Design
<b>Sabrina Bowman</b>	Community Development Specialist	City of Nampa
<b>Pat Engel</b>	Planning Specialist	Sage Community Resources

### Civic Life & Community Involvement

<b>Celeste Becia</b>	Tourism Specialist	Idaho Department of Commerce
<b>Mary Lee Wood</b>	Consultant	Lone Tree Consulting
<b>Nicholes Partin</b>	Rural Development Specialist	USDA Rural Development
<b>Mandy DeCastro</b>	Program Specialist	Association of Idaho Cities
<b>Deb Krum</b>	Asset Building Coordinator	Association of Idaho Cities
<b>Sean Wilson</b>	Community Outreach Worker	Gov. Coord. Council for Families & Children

### Home Team Leaders

<b>Don Stephens</b>	Mayor	City of Weiser
<b>James Grunke</b>	Executive Director	WA County Economic Development Comm.
<b>ED Diana Thomas</b>	WA County Commissioner	Washington County
<b>LU Amy McNight</b>	Weiser City Council	City of Weiser
<b>CL Layna Hafer</b>	Weiser City Council	City of Weiser

## **Review Schedule**

*Thursday, January 31 and Thursday, February 28*

The Community Review Planning Team members conducted a pre-review site visit to meet with civic leaders and Home Team leaders and discuss logistics, areas of focus and to clarify mutual expectations.



**Community Review Planning Session January 31, 2002**

*Tuesday, March 12*

After a welcome from Weiser Mayor Don Stephens, remarks about Weiser's history from author Betty Derig, team introductions, and an overview of the community review process and two-day schedule, the team separated into groups and focused on three core interest areas identified by Weiser's leadership: Local Economic Development, headed by Washington County Commissioner Diana Thomas, Land Use Planning, headed by Weiser City Councilmember Amy McNight, and Civic Life & Community Involvement, headed by Weiser City Councilmember Layna Hafer. The team engaged in conversations with Weiser community leaders and citizens, toured the area and downtown, facilitated a town meeting after dinner to present a few observations, and submitted written comments detailing their experiences. These comments reflected all phases of the review to date, and included outside resources available to Weiser in effecting positive change, as well as existing underappreciated assets in the community.



**Home team member and youth advocate Dahlia Stender speaks during the first morning session on March 12, 2002**



### *Wednesday, March 13*

Visiting Team Members met throughout the morning to discuss and distill the information gathered during the previous day's activities. Each focus team prepared a brief outline of their observations and recommendations. At a city-sponsored public lunch at the Weiser Community Center, the public was treated to a brief overhead slide show presentation reflecting an overview of Weiser and surrounding areas and thematic photos reflecting the areas of focus. Focus team members then presented their summary reports to the public and facilitated limited discussion among attendees about issues raised, challenges and next steps.



**Community luncheon and debriefing at the Vendome Community Center March 13, 2002**

### **Core Interest Areas:**

- ☐ **Land Use Planning**
- ☐ **Local Economic Development**
- ☐ **Civic Life & Community Involvement**

# Land Use Planning Team Report

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“Would you tell me, please which way I ought to go from here?” asked Alice. “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat. “I don’t much care where” said Alice. “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat. —*Alice in Wonderland*

## Weiser entryways

“Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.” —*William James*

Entryways into a city provide a first impression to visitors about the town. Perceptions regarding investment, values, and amenities are often formed within the first few hundred feet as people travel into the area. Within minutes, visitors will decide whether they are interested in finding out more and may decide spontaneously whether to exit the main road and discover the treasures that lay deeper within the community.



Entryways into Weiser should be focal points that communicate a message about the community and its self- image. Currently, portions of Weiser’s entryways assert blighted buildings, trash, and poor signage. All entryways to town can be improved with concerted clean up and clearer signage. The signage to the downtown area might attract a higher volume of visitor traffic if it were made larger and more attractive, perhaps featuring silhouettes or color representations of some of the numerous historic buildings. Downtown Weiser contains treasures such as a restored depot and a castle, and these amenities could be broadcast far and wide. At the entryways, maps, brochures, and other information could be available about the downtown at kiosks or tour stations including methods for access, additional amenities such as restaurants, motels and other local businesses such as Fawn’s Fudge and the Weiser Signal American.

The planning group suggests placement of kiosks on the north and south entrances. These kiosks could provide information accessible from the driver's side window of a car and a large map of the city. The south entrance is a key place for a "pocket park" since it also serves as the entryway to the Weiser River Trail.

In addition to a kiosk, this entrance could be improved to include picnic tables, restrooms, parking, and information about the trail. A long-range goal would be to include bicycling amenities and horse facilities. This important community location is one end of the Bridge-to-Bridge master plan referred to later in this document. The western entrance to Weiser, shared with Annex, is the other end of the Bridge-to-Bridge plan and could also have improved signage, a kiosk station, and cleaner appearance.

## Bridge to Bridge

"The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them." —*Denis Watley*



### Bridge from Annex over the Snake River into Weiser

The closure of the sale yard is both a blow to Weiser and a tremendous opportunity. The use of this parcel of land could be a key to the town's future. There is an opportunity to use this parcel to re-connect the community to the Snake River. There was a concern expressed by members of the community review team that Weiser has turned its back on both rivers. The rivers are noted in many responses by citizens as amenities they enjoy in Weiser, however they are substantially underutilized and poorly maintained in some areas.



### **Snake River along Weiser's east side of downtown**

With the sale yard property, Weiser has the chance to connect several city-owned properties into a major river-oriented amenity that bolsters the tourism, recreation, and retiree potentials of the community. The City of Weiser can explore ways to finance and acquire the sale yard property as soon as possible. Options might include involving an intermediary such as the Nature Conservancy ([www.tnc.org](http://www.tnc.org)) or the Trust for Public Land ([www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)).



### **Snake River along Weiser's west side of downtown**

Financing options might include the revenue stream from the electricity distribution, or disposition of the electricity distribution system, using the proceeds to purchase the site. A feasibility study should also be completed of alternative uses for the property including recreational options or mixed-use development including residential areas.

One option the group thought had potential was a multi-use recreation hub including a new trailhead for the Weiser Trail, restrooms, a marina, boat docks, RV parking and a campground. This area could then



be connected to Mortimer's Island and include a plan for the area including a park, ball fields, picnic area, nature walk, boardwalk in the wetland, and a disability accessible fishing dock. To make this area successful, and tie it to Downtown Weiser, a pedestrian underpass or overpass of the railroad would be important. Pedestrian access to both bridges should also be analyzed.



### **Current Weiser River Trailhead**

The region also needs a major clean up effort to get rid of the trash along the roadways and in the neighborhoods. A master plan should be developed for the entire corridor from the sale yard and bridge to Annex to the bridge over the Weiser River (the south entrance to town). While this could be an extensive overall project, with community support and comprehensive planning, it could provide a unifying effect for the entire city.



**A less appealing view of the Weiser River Trailhead...**



**...and surrounding areas in the neighborhood**



Once a plan has been developed with quality citizen participation, implementation could be phased in as funding is identified. This project will direct more traffic through downtown, encourage pedestrian access from downtown to the rivers, and spur further development of amenities, quality housing, and recreational opportunities.

## **Annex**

“Let us take things as we find them: let us not attempt to distort them into what they are not. We cannot make facts. All our wishing cannot change them. We must use them.” —*John Henry Cardinal Newman*

Weiser tries to distance itself from Annex, Oregon. Recognizing that the Annex area has considerable clean up challenges surrounding land use and blighted areas, it is important to acknowledge the impact



it makes on Weiser. Like it or not, Annex is part of the Weiser community. Annex children attend upper-grade Weiser schools, and residents of Annex work and shop in Weiser.

Ideas for including Annex in Weiser activities are as follows: Involve Annex in any Weiser clean up initiatives, promote regular communication with Malheur County officials related to land use planning and zoning, promote the positive aspects of the 'Bridge to Bridge' vision if the community decides to move forward with such an effort, hold an interstate relationship building event to promote increased communication, and encourage discussion with Malheur County officials regarding problems of mutual concern. By building an ongoing relationship with the residents of Annex and including them in Weiser events, the Annex entrance to Weiser and the corresponding 'Bridge to Bridge' planning effort may increase its chance to be successful and contribute greatly to the quality of life in both communities.

The 'Bridge to Bridge' project could profoundly change Weiser's relationship with Annex, strengthen community connections, and create a strong sense of mutual civic pride. It is very important to recognize that Annex really is a part of the Weiser community. Annex can help or hinder Weiser as it strives to reach its goals.

## Highway 95 Master Plan

*"The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created--created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination." —John Schaar*

Weiser has a chance to have a different orientation to Highway 95 than surrounding communities such as Payette or Fruitland. There is much at risk here. The lack of a master plan for the development of this corridor could jeopardize Weiser's identity and the continued viability of its downtown. Weiser can avoid being a continuation of the strip-mall development occurring in the Payette/Fruitland area along HWY 95 with strong zoning and planning policies to guide development of the HWY 95 corridor through town. Incorporation of traveler services nodes along HWY 95 should be encouraged.



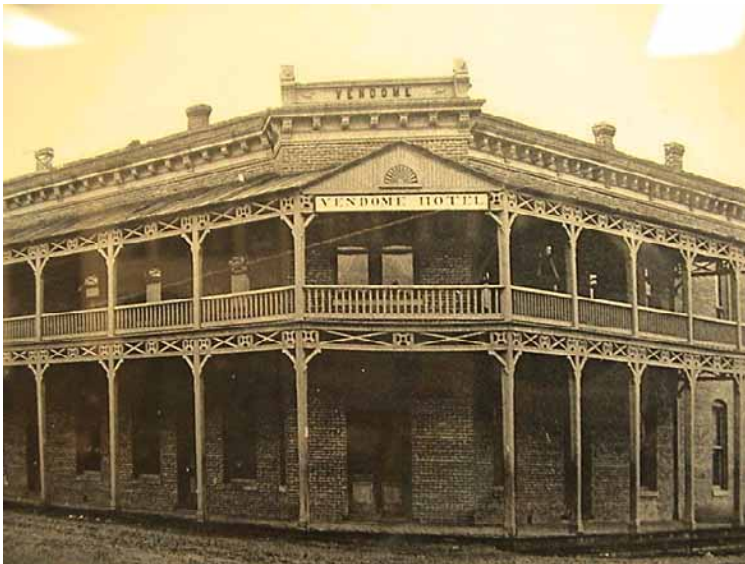
**Weiser Business Center along Highway 95 Corridor**

The planning team encourages Weiser to think carefully about allowing the “big box” retail type development along HWY 95. At a minimum, consider requiring service roads to reduce direct access, impact fees, setbacks, turn-lanes, and buffering from residential neighborhoods. If the new development and traffic patterns are encouraged to stay on HWY 95, there will be no reason for people to go to the downtown area.

## **Downtown**

“The greatest revolution in our generation is that of human beings, who by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.” —*Marilyn Ferguson*

Improvements that have completed downtown thus far are wonderful! The Vendome Community Center is an outstanding achievement.



**Remnants of Weiser's Vendome Hotel live on...**



**...in Weiser's new Vendome Community Events Center**

Historical resources such as the Pythian Castle and pride in salvagable old buildings are a very positive focus, as are the attractive historically themed street lighting and cobblestone brick in the area.



**Detail of Pythian Castle interior stained glass**

The Depot is an enormous community victory and the story of its salvation should go down in Weiser lore. The Depot has excellent potential for the future in terms of commercial development or as an additional community gathering place. Access to the depot should be highlighted and properly signed from all parts of town.



**Weiser's historic Depot**

Focus should be kept on filling store fronts and downtown buildings with 'mixed use' of residential, office, commercial, and service-oriented businesses. Façade improvement programs should be considered for private property and may include features such as low interest loans and matching funds. The central business district is quite walkable with consistent sidewalks, curbs, and gutters, but a stop sign at the State and Commercial intersection allowing pedestrian crossing might be a positive improvement. Development of a historical district might be considered, providing for the potential use of historical tax credits for redevelopment.



**Historic Downtown**

## **Industrial Property**

“If we want to solve a problem that we have never solved before, we must leave the door to the unknown ajar.” —*Richard P. Feynman*

The community of Weiser should be complimented on the fact that industrial parcels do not take access directly from HWY 95. If this is a continued policy direction, it can maintain the degree of safety in crucial transportation corridors and prevent congestion as Weiser develops in the future. There are two primary areas in and near Weiser that could accommodate industrial needs for land parcels from five to twenty acres for a potential manufacturing/industrial business. The first area is along the HWY 95 bypass route on the northeast edge of Weiser’s city limits. The approximately 15 acres of land is for sale and currently within Weiser’s impact area but remains in Washington county. City water and sewer services could be developed to the site with minimal difficulty. The land is currently zoned agricultural, but could be rezoned commercial through annexation or city/county rezoning.

Weiser’s primary industrial park is located around the airport approximately two miles south of the city limits near HWY 95. Land is available for purchase and development, including city-owned land and three-phase power and natural gas are also available. Redman Homes, Champion Homes, and Idaho Timber currently operate in the park, which has highway and rail access.

One current challenge related to the industrial park involves the groundwater, which currently exceeds established acceptable levels of nitrates. The result is increased costs (through installation of a filtration system) in the development of any water used for domestic purposes. The visiting team understands that current discussions regarding providing City water and sewer service are underway. Infrastructure development of this nature should be expedited if economic development through increased industry is a desirable option to Weiser leadership. A large manufacturing firm or other industrial development faces few options if it were considering relocating to the Weiser area given current available land and circumstances.



### **Redman Homes, one of several manufacturing industries near the airport**

It cannot be stated enough that future efforts to zone suitable tracts of land and bring adequate water, sewer, and power to identified future industrial areas is critical to future economic development of the region. If job creation is identified as a high priority, it will most likely occur through expansion of existing business or relocation of businesses not currently operating in the area.

Any extension of city services should incorporate development agreements to address future City standards as part of an Airport Industrial Park Master Plan. This plan should address multiple uses including private land, development districts, leased land for “hanger houses” and airport expansion. An environmental assessment should be conducted to help determine feasibility of different uses and impacts on the environment. The City/County partnership might consider the applicability of an urban renewal district in this area. Ken Harward with the Association of Idaho Cities would be a good source of information on urban renewal.

“Mixed use” zoning needs to be clarified, not utilized as a catchall. “Mixed use” can mean different things within zoning areas and may not provide an adequate direction for development. The City is encouraged to define the areas by desired outcomes such as residential, commercial, light industrial, residential professional, etc, and create the vision through planning rather than defer to the category of “mixed use.” Certain types of development may be allowed under each zoning category, and require different development parameters. Examples of these more detailed zoning ordinances should include clarification of density in residential areas, and buffering of areas where large tracts of land next to each other may be incompatible as they are currently zoned.

## **Residential Areas**

*“They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. —Andy Warhol*

Consistency of land use surrounding different types of housing needs to be addressed, perhaps with a more detailed delineation of housing density and a breakdown of the residential zoning. Uniform requirements should be evaluated for placement of mobile homes.

Another recommendation might be to require new housing developments to include parks in the subdivisions, or include a “park credit” cost for the city to develop parks and open spaces. Civic clubs or schools might consider adopting or helping to develop city parks. Affordable housing should be



recognized as a need in the community and valued for its contribution to the “low cost of living” which has been documented as a strength of Weiser.

City leaders should evaluate their bias and misperceptions regarding affordable housing and the symptoms of other social issues presenting themselves in Weiser. The team feels concerns should be addressed and resources committed to programs designed to help solve the source of problems such as neighborhood decay and drugs, but not perpetuate false assumptions.



#### **Affordable housing at Pinewood Square Apartments**

Encouraging quality complementary affordable housing programs with attached supportive services will also help to recognize and appreciate diversity in Weiser. All of the stakeholders in the community should be at the table for this dialogue.

### **City Services**

*“Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.” —King Whitney Jr.*

Weiser should seriously consider consistent enforcement of city codes and property standards. While this may be a deviation from the old way of doing business, consistency with standards and enforcement will help to reduce the blight and dilapidated areas within Weiser.

As evidenced from earlier photographs, an abundance of trash, abandoned cars and weeds can be found both in residential and commercial areas- leaving an impression of disinvestment. The code enforcement officer or officers should be empowered and supported politically to enforce a standard of property upkeep that Weiser can be proud of.

Various techniques can be utilized to help increase the level of city services and raise the standard for community pride and reinvestment. A full-time code enforcement officer could implement a public education campaign about city codes, such as “Did you know?...” Encouraging neighborhood associations will help improve property conditions and increase citizen participation in government and civic affairs.



The City of Weiser might consider providing training opportunities for landlords on keeping illegal activity out of rental property. Various jurisdictions in the Treasure Valley have sponsored successful trainings and have seen participation and cooperation by landlords increase exponentially. Additional community policing efforts cost little and can have enormous preventative impact in communities. A strong neighborhood watch program sponsored by the police department will help some of the neighborhoods struggling with drug activity.

Standards for property maintenance should be set by the city on all city-owned property. City employees should be empowered and included in proposed improvements. Clean up week sponsored by the civic clubs is a great idea! Don't forget to include Annex. Encouraging responsibility and participation by the property owners in a community clean up effort will help sustain results.

Continuing service projects focused on community pride will provide a basis for a cooperative model of problem solving. These projects should be supported and applauded by the city. Discontinuous sidewalks concern many residents. The absence of sidewalks in areas, or damaged sidewalks in others should be inventoried and the level of commitment by residents for a replacement or repair project should be evaluated.



#### **Inconsistent sidewalks, curb, and gutter**

The city should consider involving the fire and police at a higher level in all planning of city projects, even if it is not apparent at first as to the need for their involvement. Often they are the first 'city' ambassadors and representatives people encounter. Thus it is critical that these departments are informed about community priorities to secure their support for and investment in the city's approach to a variety of problems.

### **Resources for implementation**

A variety of resources are available to assist in the implementation of the ideas proposed in this document. Most important, their availability is often determined by the creativity and innovation of those who make the proposals. One idea raised during the community review involved using the University of Idaho's architecture school to stage a design competition for the south entryway, sale yard and Mortimer's Island areas.

The Army Corps of Engineers may be a resource for planning around the rivers and wetlands areas. FEMA's 'Project Impact' may help to provide planning funds as well, especially surrounding concerns of flooding near the rivers. The Idaho Department of Lands may have funds available to help leverage private or local funds. EDA Brownfield money may be available for clean up and purchase of the sale yard if an economic benefit and job creation can be identified and documented.

Explore Soil and Water Conservation Funds for park development of the 'Bridge to Bridge' plan. Also, the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department has programs for boat ramps and marinas at the waterfront. Engage in a discussion with the Idaho Department of Transportation regarding leveraging transportation dollars with other potential grant programs. Always share best practices with other communities.

Mobile home restoration funds are available- contact Idaho Housing and Finance Association for more details and to find out the administrating agency in the Weiser area. Community Development Block Grant funds though the Idaho Department of Commerce may be able to assist with housing projects, downtown revitalization and infrastructure development for industrial properties.

HUD drug elimination grants may also be available for federally assisted housing- the Idaho State HUD office can provide the details about this and other HUD grants.

Team members from the planning group are also available for consultation and advice. Please contact us for follow-up, facilitation, and consultation.

# Local Economic Development Team Report

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## Overall Impressions

Weiser is fortunate to enjoy a healthy variety of community assets that potentially can contribute to enhancing the local and area economy. In general, the 'community environment' provides a strong foundation for building effective economic development efforts, as evidenced by the following observations:

- ❑ **Weiser's inherent strengths include a rich and colorful history and a strong sense of place. Residents have a passion for their town and a very powerful sense of community identity.**



**The Heritage Center, with its performance area, period rooms, and artifacts is of enormous historic value to the community**



- ❑ **Weiser has a positive small-town feel, and a quality of life that embraces a family-friendly atmosphere and a thriving multi-faith community.**
- ❑ **There is a good mix of businesses overall in the community, with some notable exceptions in the downtown core.**
- ❑ **The citizens in Weiser are willing to take on projects, and the community has already seen numerous victories in the number of projects accomplished.**

These basic conditions are not always present in Northwest rural communities. The fact that Weiser does exhibit such qualities helps supply a stable beginning point for new economic development initiatives.

The following points of discussion will address specific issues that surfaced during the review process. These items are presented within the context of strengths or barriers for future development efforts. Issues are also grouped under three main focus categories: first, the Downtown Commercial District; secondly, Business Development; and lastly, Quality of Life and Related Issues.

## **Summary Points**

### *Downtown Commercial District*

Downtown Weiser is a unique place that has survived drastic dis-investment following the construction of Interstate 84 during the early 1970's. This new transportation artery bypassed the town several miles to the west, and ushered in the twilight period of Downtown Weiser as a regional commercial center. Since that time, a different kind of commercial life has gradually emerged for the downtown district--one that has been relatively immune to the "big box" retailers elsewhere in the valley.

There are a number of historic and architecturally interesting buildings downtown in addition to the new Vendome Center and the historic Depot. Areas of revitalization have been completed and some street work finished. There is much left to do, but much to build upon. Organization, focus, and public/private support seem to be the current challenges for the community in the area of downtown revitalization. Specific observations include:

- ❑ **The mix of retail businesses is relatively healthy and includes some very interesting specialty shops, such as Fawn's Fudge, that are a draw for increased foot traffic.**



**Fawn's Fudge is an excellent community asset in downtown**

- ❑ Notably absent from downtown are larger anchor tenants. In the absence of these anchors, the establishment of more specialty shops could be an appropriate strategy for creating more commercial vitality. This most likely will not happen without additional encouragement and support from downtown stakeholders such as the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and the business community.
- ❑ Parking and traffic flow appear to be a concern to the local residents and business owners. It seems that the City, working in cooperation with businesses and residents, could establish an overall plan for parking and traffic flow in the downtown core to meet current needs and to allow for future growth and development.
- ❑ It would be helpful for the downtown merchants and the Chamber of Commerce to become more active in promoting and supporting businesses, and in working on planning efforts for the downtown.
- ❑ Business retention and expansion need to be a high priority for the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders. Several businesses interviewed perceived that Weiser's city government does not support them. This perception presents a barrier to future cooperation.
- ❑ A number of quality businesses already exist. Make them feel wanted and appreciated. There are many resource documents available on business retention and expansion programs that could be used to design a program for Weiser. The challenge is the ownership and leadership of the program. A modifiable business retention survey is provided in this document as an additional resource.
- ❑ The downtown has a good human scale and friendly feel to it. Work to build on this, and to maintain the feeling.
- ❑ The facades in the downtown area still need substantial work.



**Downtown facades in need of renovation**

Space utilization downtown needs to be a focus that includes using the upper floors for professional offices and business service companies. Be mindful of the highest and best use of property and avoid low end uses if possible. The City, Chamber, and business organizations could work with the property owners to plan for the best use for the properties and help them attract the appropriate businesses.

It is important to recognize that other areas, such as health care or sporting events, can have a large impact on retail leakage. When consumers have to travel out of town for these activities, their spending patterns are impacted as well. Weiser is currently in a good position with its hospital, but continued community support is vital.

Weiser has city-owned distribution of electrical power. This is a great asset to the community for the revenue it generates, but the quality and reliability of the power was reported to be poor by the business community. The City should address this issue, or it will impact the City's ability to attract and retain businesses sensitive to interrupted power supply. Signage into the downtown core is poor. This should probably be a priority for the community, working with the state and county highway agencies. It could be helpful for one agency at the City to take the lead on this concern.

## **Business Development**

Business retention/expansion and new development activity in Weiser and the surrounding area were the subject of much discussion during this review. There is good potential for expansion of existing companies, and there seems to be an adequate amount of development sites for new commercial business as well. Current city infrastructure seems poised to be able to accommodate this activity. However, concerns were raised from several directions about local government's appropriate role in supporting economic development efforts. For example, the reviewing team heard comments that perhaps the City Council was not engaged in business development efforts. The question even came up about the City having a somewhat anti-business posture. Given the short time frame of the review process, it was not possible to determine whether these statements held merit or not. However, these perceptions were very real to many present, and that alone suggests that this issue be explored and resolved. With support of the County Commissioners, the Economic Development Commission, and the City Council and staff, a local government task force could be established to talk about acceptable practices and policies for furthering economic development. In addition to this central issue, several other pertinent observations were collected as follows:

In order to maintain a viable economic base, retention and expansion need to become a top priority for the City, the County, and the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber could possibly take the lead with the support of the City and the business community. However, it appears that the Chamber struggles with resources and focus, as many small town Chambers do. Therefore, the City, Washington County Economic Development, and the business community would need to rally around support of the Chamber, helping to set tight priorities in order to be effective.

Issues of quality and reliability of electrical power need to be researched and resolved, if necessary, in order to promote the community for business development. Coming to terms with this issue also needs to be a top priority for the community.

Weiser has a rich agricultural and ag-processing heritage. It is not clear that there exists a good understanding in the general community of the importance of this sector to the local economy, including an appreciation of the role that farm workers play in this economic structure. It may be helpful to implement an agriculture and ag-business awareness and appreciation program to address these elements.

There is a need to support existing business expansion efforts, such as Appleton, Redman, even while the community recruits other businesses. If this base is lost, it will be much more difficult to attract other businesses and maintain a stable and growing local economy.



There is an opportunity to better understand the local communications infrastructure. It appears that the community has a competitive advantage with two carriers providing local exchange services. This asset could help attract businesses if fully understood and marketed.

Weiser is to be congratulated on its planned water treatment expansion. It is important to maintain this momentum and to continue study of wastewater treatment capacity.

Weiser has an asset in available industrial property. It makes sense to continue to support the existing "big" park, while considering options for developing smaller, light industrial properties. Some concern was heard about attracting too many entry-level jobs. In reality, there is no basis for this worry. While protecting the existing businesses, Weiser can develop a strategy to attract higher-paying jobs. The danger is that without the current large employers, the economy will falter—making job development much more difficult, and making maintaining the infrastructure to support any additional business expansion very difficult.

The community presently has an adequate opportunity to manage growth along the new Highway 95 bypass. Although some development has already occurred, a large number of undeveloped sites still exist. The goal is to "guide" healthy development in those areas. Retail development in this area that directly competes with the Downtown business area will only create destructive patterns of dis-investment. There are appropriate types of business growth for this area, such as highway services, professional/high-tech companies, and the like, which could be encouraged with proper zoning.

## **Quality of Life and Related Issues**

It was apparent throughout the community review process that the Weiser Community contains many elements which support the ability for individuals and families to enjoy quality living. It was generally recognized by the reviewing team that there is a high probability of expanding and growing these factors.

This report specifically addresses those "quality of life" attributes that can truly make a difference for a community in relation to prospects for future economic growth and healthy community development. Again, the following discussion points will summarize highlights of the various observations made by the reviewing team concerning this topic.

It appears that the Weiser hospital has made very positive strides in recent times and is a great asset for the community. It is important that residents be made aware of the hospital's progress, and of the need to support plans for future development and improvement. This hospital represents much more than health care: it works to hold down retail leakage, acts as a marketing element in attracting and retaining businesses, and is a sizable employer.



### **Weiser Memorial Hospital**

Quality schools are very nearly a basic requirement for business growth. It was apparent that the community feels good about the school system. This relationship and feeling of support could be even further enhanced through additional thought about collaborative efforts. With this solid foundation, community members, school children, organizations, and local government could reasonably expect to creatively cover new ground in growing and enhancing this asset, thereby strengthening the entire community.



### **Weiser High School, home of the Wolverines**

It appears that Weiser has an adequate and available workforce, and could use that as a marketing tool. It is important for workforce development and training to be an ongoing priority for the community, using any ties to TVCC, BSU, and Sage Community Resources to host upgrade training for local workers.

It was clear to the review team that residents perceive Weiser as a safe community. This attribute can be an asset; however, there were some side discussions about a potential drug problem. These positions are incongruent. If there is a drug problem, it should be addressed. If not, the perception should be corrected.

Jill Chestnut, executive director of Drug Free Idaho, offers the following information related to concerns about youth and drug use. For additional information, contact her at 1-800-344-8594:

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### **STUDENT DRUG-TESTING BOOKLET AVAILABLE**

**\*\* An Informative Guide for Educators, Parents and Community Leaders \*\***

In June 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court broadened the authority of public schools to test students for illegal drugs. The Court ruled to allow random drug tests for all middle- and high-school students participating in competitive extracurricular activities. The ruling greatly expands the scope of school drug testing, which previously had been allowed for student athletes only.

Medical research has shown that introducing chemical changes in the brain through the use of drugs can have serious and long-term adverse effects on adolescents. Testing, coupled with comprehensive treatment services, can reduce students' use of illicit drugs and remove a significant barrier to academic achievement.

Now it's up to individual schools and communities to decide whether drugs are a significant threat and testing is an appropriate response. While testing is a powerful tool in reducing drug use in schools and businesses all over the country, it involves many issues that must be fully understood and carefully weighed before implementation.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has created a booklet, "What You Need to Know About Drug Testing in Schools," to provide schools and communities considering a drug-testing program with a broader understanding of the sometimes controversial issue as well as solid, up-to-date information on which to base a decision.

The publication explains what drug testing is all about, who pays for it, who does the testing, what it shows about an individual's drug use and, equally important, what it does not tell you. The booklet is available by calling ONDCP's clearinghouse at 1-800-666-3332 or by downloading online at [www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov](http://www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov).

Additional information about student drug testing in schools can be found on [www.TeachersGuide.org](http://www.TeachersGuide.org), the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's resource for educators. The site provides ideas for incorporating drug-prevention messages into the classroom, supplying educators with standards-based, interdisciplinary classroom activities, a list of government and organizational drug prevention/assistance programs and a venue for teachers to share ideas and tips with other educators. The site was created and designed with input from veteran educators and behavioral experts.

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This information comes from MEDIA CAMPAIGN FLASH: one source of the latest news on the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

**ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN:** The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign targets youth ages 9-18, parents and other adults who influence choices young people make to lead drug-free lives.

To get the word out across every economic and cultural boundary, the Campaign uses a mix of modern communications techniques to educate and empower young people to reject illicit drugs. The Campaign also teams up with civic and non-profit organizations, faith-based groups and private corporations to enlist and engage people in prevention efforts at school, at work and at play. For more information on the Media Campaign, check out [www.mediacampaign.org](http://www.mediacampaign.org).

Weiser has a number of homes with historic and architectural significance that add to the small-town charm of the community. At the same time, the condition and appearance of some neighborhoods detract from the overall impression of the community. Weiser might want to adopt a clean-up program with both rewards and penalties for participating or not participating.



**Galloway House Bed & Breakfast**

## **Suggested Action Items**

In general, the Weiser community contains many strengths and attributes that can provide a strong underpinning for future economic development activity. This is evidenced to some degree by the variety and number of projects that have been successfully accomplished to date. However, there does appear to be some community uncertainty as to what direction or steps to take next. The appropriate role for local government (in economic development), future direction for the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Revitalization activities and marketing, the level and kind of support for business growth all seem to present struggles for the apparent community stakeholders. Effectively addressing these possible "question marks" is critical. Weiser, like many other similar towns, has limited resources, which creates the need to "work smart" and work together to continue to move forward.

The following information represents a compilation of steps and actions that the Economic Development Review Team developed as a suggestion of next steps to be considered by community leaders and residents. These ideas are loosely categorized by generally accepted strategic development options. This discussion does not present a comprehensive list, but rather details a fairly immediate collection of actionable items upon which the community could embark in short order.

### *Organizational Development*

Initiate a community-based participatory decision-making process that defines a general community vision and establishes a few key priority areas. The intent of this activity is to "get everyone on the same page" as much as possible. Otherwise, this community has the potential to create many alternative projects that would compete for limited resources. Indeed, even at the time of this report's preparation, Weiser has embarked on a community visioning process with capable consulting assistance from Dick Gardner and Jim Birdsall. This report will be available at the second such session on October 22, 2002.



**Dick Gardner and Jim Birdsall lead Weiser's first Visioning Session on September 17, 2002**

Bring together key players such as the City, County Government, the Economic Development Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, Local Business, and area banks in order to develop a common plan for business retention and development. This same core group could also address ways to strengthen local business advocacy, for instance through the Chamber of Commerce. Strengthen the organizations you already have rather than create new ones. The community development and business retention survey in this document may provide some good insight for future discussion.

*General Business Development*

It is extremely important to begin managing development along the Highway 95 by-pass route. A community-based team of volunteers (possibly part of other planning efforts) needs to develop a future vision and make recommendations to Planning and Zoning to support those goals. It is appropriate to think in terms of high quality and high amenity development. This area could support a future business park, which would require the consideration of public/private partnerships for controlling and developing selected sites.

The current efforts to resolve water/sewer issues at the industrial park south of town should be continued. Due to the potential expense, even more focus should be taken on alternative solutions, such as the consideration of a separate "non-potable" supply of water for fire protection. These plans need to be long term and include the involvement of citizens and stakeholders as they are developed.

In terms of new business recruitment and existing entrepreneurial support, the reviewing team strongly advises the creation of a flexible small business park. The area in town currently used as a private labor camp may apparently become available in the future and could be appropriately developed, unless a partnership develops with Idaho Migrant Council to refurbish and salvage the site or other options are explored to improve the quality of available housing for the important regional migrant labor force.





### **Weiser's migrant farm labor camp**

To undertake such a project will require a collaborative effort by the City, the County, and the EDC. It would be advisable to create a development strategy for this site within the immediate future. It is important not to neglect community strengths (see Quality of Life issues) that can help play an important role in economic development efforts. Any development strategies will be more effective if they also embrace these factors.

### *Business Expansion/Retention*

Given the important role that existing business plays in providing a strong local economic foundation, it would be wise for this community to develop a formal retention/expansion strategy. Guided by a local group (possibly the Chamber), this effort should strive to achieve widespread support and consensus. Suggested models for strategies can be obtained from the Idaho Department of Commerce and the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service.

Building upon recent physical improvements in the Central Business District, it is critical to now establish a Downtown Retail Development and Marketing Program. This effort needs to have an assigned lead agency, such as the Chamber. However, consideration could be given to re-energizing the merchants' association. A key element will be to create appropriate and actionable program activities.

### *Business Recruitment*

As part of any business retention/expansion efforts, there appears to be a current opportunity to communicate with tenants and property owners in the industrial area south of town. This regular effort to find out what business needs are can serve as the underpinning for related strategic efforts and ensure that all community and business leaders are on the same page.

Given the local "sense of identity" it makes sense to institute a "come home" campaign to recruit former residents to bring jobs and investment to Weiser. Again, a lead agency could provide project oversight with the interested groups supplying logistical support (mailing lists, promotions materials, postage, etc.).

# Civic Life & Community Involvement Team Report

## **Introduction**

Most folks know Weiser as the home of one of the country's most popular fiddle festivals. What they may not know is that Weiser is also a wonderful destination for history buffs, outdoor enthusiasts, hunters and anglers. Visiting team members were also struck by residents' pride in their community and the strong value for personal relationships forged through the years. Weiser has an admirable volunteer spirit, reflected in the countless hours contributed to the annual festival, the Institute and Depot restoration, Pythian Castle preservation and other unique projects. These are all tremendous assets.

Many residents, particularly seniors, expressed a clear identification with Weiser's agricultural roots. From the stories seniors related about the Great Depression to the cultural and economic contributions of the local livestock sale yard, agriculture has shaped a significant portion of Weiser's identity. As is the case elsewhere in Idaho, core economies are shifting, often away from traditional resource-based industries. This is causing some communities to re-assess their priorities and explore a new vision for the future. In this respect, Weiser is fortunate to have rich natural and human capital, historic architectural gems, riverfront location, recreational access and close proximity to Idaho's cultural, political and corporate center.



**Association of Idaho Cities Youth Asset Building Coordinator Deb Krum interviews a Weiser Citizen**

This section will attempt to focus on those aspects of Weiser that influence its identity and appearance, the way residents shape and are shaped by the history of predecessors and place, Weiser's local livelihood, the community's public face, and the movement of people within and through town. As with any change or evolution, Weiser's ability to cultivate its collective energy and resources will depend on thoughtful and strategic planning that involves all members of the community.

## Identity

### *Where the heck is Weiser, Idaho?*

A fundamental question could be “what are the boundaries for the community of Weiser?” Are there locations outside the incorporated area of town that locals or neighbors think of as connected to Weiser? It has been pointed out that many people who work and attend school in Weiser actually reside in Annex or other neighboring communities. Others who have businesses in Weiser (and contribute to Weiser’s tax base) may live outside the city limits.

**Strategy.** It may be worth exploring and defining Weiser’s relationship with neighboring towns and unincorporated areas despite physical or arbitrary (political) borders. You may discover previously untapped resources or be able to draw natural assets into your community development strategy. This is as good a place to start as any.

### *Why does Weiser exist and what makes it unique?*

The answers to this two-part question say a lot about Weiser’s identity. Weiser may have been put on the map for one reason and now find itself sustained and defined by something else. There’s the old saying “I don’t mind change, I just don’t want to **be** changed.” Re-assessing Weiser’s identity in the context of shifting economic, transportation and employment trends won’t change the nature of residents, but it may help as you chart a direction and strategy for the community’s future.

**Strategy.** You may find some useful starting material from the Community Review notes, SWOT analysis and survey results. If necessary, facilitate group discussions among seniors, youth, business leaders, farming families, low- to moderate-income households, and finally, Weiser’s neighbors and visitors.

“Asset mapping” can be a useful tool in this dialogue. Distribute cameras to seniors, youth and other groups and ask them to take pictures of (and describe) their favorite places, people, events or institutions around Weiser, then display those photos and descriptions in public events or during planning discussions.

Team members discussed several things that help define Weiser: it is home to the annual Fiddle Festival; the Institute, Pythian Castle and Depot (among other historic structures); it is a gateway to Hell’s Canyon and various hunting, fishing and recreational opportunities; and finally, Weiser has played an important role in Western Idaho’s history, settlement and commerce. With these facts as a starting point, community members and visitors could add what comes to mind when they think of Weiser.

- ☐ **What are Weiser’s core values?**
- ☐ **What are its residents known for?**
- ☐ **Are residents welcoming towards visitors and tourists?**
- ☐ **If tourism is important, what kind of visitors do you want?**
- ☐ **Which community assets are important to residents, tourists, or both?**
- ☐ **What keeps you living in or visiting Weiser?**
- ☐ **Describe the ideal Weiser in the next five to 10 years.**
- ☐ **What is important in or about Weiser that needs to be preserved, and what changes would make it even better?**

## Strengths, Assets and Challenges

### *Faith-based community*

We were made aware of Weiser's (Christian) faith-based community and heard of the cooperation among these churches and their participation in larger community projects. This is an important source of volunteerism, and we hope that all faiths are encouraged and welcome to contribute to community projects and service.



**Weiser has a thriving and diverse faith community, who are an excellent source of volunteers.**

### *Education and youth*

We observed that Weiser's school system is held in high esteem by residents, and we met several articulate and thoughtful high school students during our visit. Students reported their appreciation for Weiser's small-town atmosphere, while lamenting the lack of youth-oriented activities and employment options. Several felt there was no economic future for them locally once they had graduated from high school. There is obviously the danger that this could be a self-fulfilling prophecy. These same young adults represent potential entrepreneurs that may someday return to Weiser, bringing jobs and capital to their home town.

**Resource Idea:** We can't stress enough the gold mine of ideas and energy represented by youth; they could be invited to participate at all levels of community development and made to feel like the valuable community stakeholders they are. Think of them as potential partners in historic preservation, social services and as future business or civic leaders. Based on the comments we heard, students would like to have a stronger voice in community decision making. They deserve that opportunity. Youth would also like someplace locally to see movies. If this feeling is widespread, put them in charge of researching potential sites and strategies, exploring costs and securing revenue.

Giving a group responsibility (along with support and mentoring) is the best way to learn their abilities and priorities. The more Weiser's young people feel invested in the community and its future, the more likely they are to remain a part of it.

Many youth indicated they did not believe there was much to do after school in Weiser unless they were involved in athletics. Are there sufficient arts and cultural opportunities for students? The Washington County Youth Hope Center, spearheaded by Shad Westover of Washington County Juvenile Probation, sounds like a fantastic project and deserves tremendous community support. It seems to encompass a wide range of activities interesting to youth, such as an activity/talent center, skate park, dream playground, and water play area located in Weiser's Memorial Park. We sincerely hope youth are involved in the planning and realization of this project to secure their ongoing commitment to and investment in the community.



## Developing Assets in Weiser Youth

***What are the essential ingredients that all children need to grow up as healthy, contributing, and responsible citizens?***

*Thirteen years ago, Minnesota-based Search Institute identified 40 critical factors for young people's growth and development. Factors such as parental involvement, community support, civic engagement, and safe places with structured activities, all contribute to the healthy development of young people. Research clearly validates the important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and others in communities play in shaping young people's lives.*

As many Idahoans are discovering, creating a youth-friendly city benefits the entire community. Businesses are attracted to cities that place a high value on families and children. Juvenile crime is significantly lowered when youth are actively engaged and perceive that they are valued. Asset-rich youth are less likely to enter the social welfare system, more likely to succeed in school, and will pursue long lasting career goals and return to their hometown where they give back what they received. Communities that invest in children and youth also see a return on their investment when citizens participate in community service projects and civic improvement initiatives.



**Visiting team members interviewed a number of youth individually and in the classroom setting**

Here's the good news – Everyone can build assets anytime, any place. The responsibility does not rest alone with families, schools, schools, social service agencies, or other institutions. If you are willing to make a difference in a young person's life then you are one step closer to making a difference.



### **External Assets**

The first 20 developmental assets focus on positive experiences that young people receive from the people and institutions in their lives. Four categories of external assets are included in the framework:

- **Support**-Young people need to experience support, care, and love from their families, neighbors, and many others. They need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments.
- **Empowerment**-Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute to others. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure.
- **Boundaries and expectations**-Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are "in bounds" and "out of bounds."
- **Constructive use of time**-Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities, youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home.

### **Internal Assets**

A community's responsibility for its young does not end with the provision of external assets. There needs to be a similar commitment to nurturing the internal qualities that guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus. Indeed, shaping internal dispositions that encourage wise, responsible, and compassionate judgments is particularly important in a society that prizes individualism. Four categories of internal assets are included in the framework:

- **Commitment to learning**-Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to education and learning.
- **Positive values**-Youth need to develop strong values that guide their choices.
- **Social competencies**-Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, to build relationships, and to succeed in life.
- **Positive identity**-Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise.

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Twenty-one communities across Idaho will host an Association of Idaho Cities' AmeriCorps Promise Fellow, VISTA Promise Fellow, or Youth Asset Builder starting October 2002. AmeriCorps members have performed over 20,000 hours of service since their term began in October of 2001. More than 17,500 youth have been impacted through their service, over 3,200 adult volunteers recruited and more than 8,374 volunteer hours served. The \$3,750 cash match for an AmeriCorps member is a more than fair exchange for 1700 hours of service they provide the host community.

Idaho's Promise Fellows enhance the well-being of children and youth in Idaho by involving the whole community in pledging measurable commitments to the five fundamental resources identified by America's Promise and Idaho's Promise. The five resources include: 1) Ongoing relationships with caring adults; 2) Safe places to go with structured activities; 3) A healthy start in life; 4) Marketable skills through an effective education, and 5) Opportunities to give back to the community through service.

Idaho Youth Asset Builders will assist communities in creating asset-rich environments for youth by increasing youth developmental assets while creating and securing opportunities for youth involvement. Members will perform a variety of activities including mentoring youth, planning and developing Youth Action Councils, facilitating training on asset development, promoting youth-adult partnerships, and encouraging the inclusion of youth on community and city councils and boards of directors. This statewide program places members with local organizations serving both large and small communities.

Twenty-one host sites have been approved with a total of 36 AmeriCorps Members serving a one-year term from October 2002 through October 2003. Congratulations go out to the following communities:

- \* Ada County Juvenile Court Services – Boise
- \* Benewah County Community Coalition – St. Maries
- \* Blackfoot Bingham County Youth Coalition – Blackfoot
- \* Bonner County Alliance for Youth and Families – Sandpoint
- \* Bonneville Youth Development Council – Idaho Falls
- \* Clearwater Youth Alliance – Orofino
- \* HealthNet Mini-Cassia Coalition – Rupert
- \* Healthy Community \*Healthy Youth of Ada County – Boise
- \* Kootenai Alliance for Children & Families – Coeur d'Alene
- \* Lemhi's Promise to Youth & Family – Tendoy
- \* Lewis Clark Coalition for Families & Youth – Lewiston
- \* Lincoln County Juvenile Probation – Shoshone
- \* Madison County Community Council – Rexburg
- \* Mountain Home Community Action Coalition – Mountain Home
- \* Project Safe Place of Kootenai County – Coeur d'Alene
- \* Project Starfish – Emmett
- \* Shelley Youth Solutions – Shelley

- \* St. Luke's Wood River Medical Center – Hailey
- \* The Walker Center – Gooding
- \* Twin Falls County HealthNet Coalition – Twin Falls
- \* University of Idaho/Latah County Extension – Moscow

Contact any of these organizations and communities to hear about the impact that is energizing Idaho, and consider an asset builder or promise fellow for Weiser!

AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs that engages more than 50,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. Since 1994, more than 250,000 men and women have served in AmeriCorps, providing needed assistance to millions of Americans. An AmeriCorps Member serves 1,700 hours within a year in exchange for an education award of \$4,725.

Would you like a Promise Fellow or Asset Builder in your community? Contact Deb Krum or Mandy DeCastro at the Association of Idaho Cities: 1-800-344-8594.

### **Additional Resources**

Community Mapping, Michael Green (CO); United Way; Tyler Norris with Search Institute

Youth Community Corps

Community Garden, Farmer's Market; American Community Gardening Association ([www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)), Erik Kingston ([erikk@ihfa.org](mailto:erikk@ihfa.org))

West Central Highlands District, Russell Manwaring (Rodeo Grounds – Develop cost analysis on a sprinkler system)

### **Race relations**

While we were told that race relations were good in Weiser, we lacked the benefit of proportional input from local non-white residents or migrant farmworkers (Census 2000 data for Weiser City shows 22.9%, or nearly one in four residents are Hispanic or Latino. Census 2000 data for Washington County shows 13.8% are Hispanic or Latino, still twice the state average of 7.9%). We did not have enough of a demographically represented sample of all residents of Weiser to get a good impression of this issue. The lack of whole community participation in the community review suggests some additional community building efforts in this area may be beneficial.

Some communities report good race relations when in fact it is the separation of ethnic groups that limits conflict. Segregation is not a characteristic of healthy communities. Racial and multi-generational inclusiveness, with everyone on the team having a place and a role, is critical. We don't know if segregation or insulation between cultural groups is the case in Weiser, but would stress the importance of open dialogue among all ethnic groups, socio-economic classes and diverse faiths to insure inclusive community planning and development. Enthusiasm and investment in Weiser's success will be shared only by those at the table when strategies and decisions are formed.

**Resource Idea:** Jerome, Idaho has a roughly similar percentage of Hispanic and Latino residents. One strategy employed by Jerome's leaders was to offer cultural sensitivity and Spanish-language training to

city and county employees, particularly public safety officers. There are many ways to bridge cultural gaps and enjoy the benefits of diversity and harmony, such as celebrating the food, music, history and folkways of all residents. Contact Michael Shaw at the Association of Idaho Cities for additional information and resources.

One critical effort for the immediate future in all communities with a fast growing Hispanic population is stemming the number of Latino students who drop out of school at nearly three times the average of Anglo children. In some states such as Arizona and Florida, dropout rates are approaching forty percent of all Hispanic students. Reasons for this trend range from cultural to socio-economic, and it is clear from numerous success stories that early intervention and bi-lingual educational efforts may be effective initial remedies to this concern.

Students must experience success to build self-esteem. One professor at Boise State University who was consulted with questions about bi-lingual education efforts and language loss cited research indicating that mono-lingual children who are immersed into a bi-lingual school program where they have an opportunity to make conceptual connections between the language they know and the language they are trying to learn experience success learning the language in four to seven years, while children who hear only the language which is unfamiliar to them take as long as seven to ten years to achieve the same level. Weiser's Head Start program is already a valuable regional asset and may be a leader in this area.



**Making connections**

## **Housing**

The character of an individual, community or nation is often reflected in the treatment each offers to those lacking a political or economic voice. One concern expressed by visiting team members involved plans to demolish local farm labor housing units with no apparent strategy for replacing them. When questioned, local sources credited agricultural consolidation and mechanization with a reduction in the number of jobs typically held by migrant workers, and observed that any workers that were still needed could “live elsewhere and commute into Weiser” (ironically, concerns were also expressed that Weiser's existing affordable housing might attract limited-income households from neighboring Payette and Fruitland). Given Weiser's history of agriculture, one effective way to honor its traditions and contributions is to welcome those who make this industry economically feasible. Agricultural jobs in

Idaho pay an average of \$6.12 an hour, or \$12,729 annually. This is \$4,920 below the poverty level for a family of four.



#### **Affordable housing at Weiser Cottages**

Many individuals living on Social Security/Disability typically receive \$525 per month, or \$6,300 annually. Without adequate and affordable local housing options, these individuals and families cannot be expected to add to Weiser's community or economy. For more information on poverty, visit [www.povertyusa.org](http://www.povertyusa.org). Federal funds are available to create high-quality assisted or subsidized housing, representing a direct reinvestment of federal income taxes in Weiser, creating jobs, and bringing further economic impacts to the local economy. The bottom line is this: housing affordability creates an immediate wage subsidy for employers and a pay raise for workers; it allows households to invest additional income in local goods and services. It also provides stability to families, employees, children and their communities. We would encourage Weiser to consider this potential.

**Resource Idea:** Take a look at the housing costs of all residents, not just agricultural workers. Consider teachers, social workers, public safety and emergency workers, service industry employees, the elderly or disabled, etc. Households that are paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs are considered "housing cost burdened." They will have less income to contribute to Weiser's local economy, and are more likely to experience financial and emotional stress. If it appears that households in Weiser are in fact cost burdened, contact the Idaho Housing hotline at 1-877-438-4472 or USDA Rural Development to discuss options for addressing housing needs.

#### **Architecture — "Luck is the residue of design."**

Weiser residents are familiar with the Pythian Castle (constructed by the Knights of Pythias: [www.pythias.org](http://www.pythias.org)), the recent landscaping and exterior renovation of the Depot and the ongoing restoration of the famous Institute. In addition, Weiser's downtown contains other beautiful architectural elements worthy of preservation. Protecting the integrity of these buildings will help Weiser create year-round interest for visitors, provide a character-rich setting for a vibrant retail/commercial/residential district, and pay tribute to the community's roots. These gems hold significant potential as a destination for history or architectural enthusiasts seeking authentic examples of American design.



We understand that one historic building's interior was irreparably altered when it was lost to private ownership, and also learned of significant threats to the Pythian Castle from carelessness, intentional vandalism and structural problems. We recognize the significant resources required to stabilize and protect these structures, and encourage residents and leaders to take immediate steps to ensure their safety until more extensive renovation can take place. While these structures represent Weiser's history, they might hold the key to its future as well. In this respect, Weiser can be considered lucky—by design.

**Resource Idea:** A major challenge for Weiser is the number and diversity of significant historic structures in need of protection. Those interested in historic preservation are spread thinly among the various focus points, and some coordination of efforts might be helpful.

For instance, you might prioritize the Train Depot as a preservation project and use it as a long-term venue for fairs, a local farmer's market, etc. and as a rallying point for other preservation efforts. The key words to remember are: *Ownership, Preservation, Utilization*.

One visiting team recommendation is to bring all interested parties together to form a comprehensive preservation strategy for the entire community, perhaps creating a "Weiser Community Foundation" to pursue and administer funds or coordinate strategic planning. This would allow for identifying imminent threats, prioritizing needs, scheduling work and allocating resources. It is worthwhile to determine what's most important, although this process might be made easier with some outside (expert and objective) facilitation to help assess relative historic values and suggest priorities. Weiser already has a working relationship with the Idaho Heritage Trust on specific projects; it may also benefit from the following resources:

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
[www.nthp.org/about\\_the\\_trust/western.html](http://www.nthp.org/about_the_trust/western.html)

M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust  
[www.murdock-trust.org](http://www.murdock-trust.org)

Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation  
[www.kongsgaard-goldman.org](http://www.kongsgaard-goldman.org)

PacifiCorp Foundation for Learning  
[www.pacifcorp.com](http://www.pacifcorp.com)

Wells Fargo and Co.  
[www.wellsfargo.com/about/charitable.jhtml](http://www.wellsfargo.com/about/charitable.jhtml)

Along with the Land Use Planning Team, we saw enormous potential to develop Weiser's riverfront and to create a 'Bridge to Bridge' corridor for walkers, bikers and equestrian use. This represents another possible way to make Weiser a base stop along a major highway. In our visit we observed a lack of recognition of activities and a lack of promotion of many resources (aside from the Fiddle Festival). We recommend that Weiser capitalize on current visitors to promote additional attributes and encourage additional visits.

## **Additional Resources**

### *Lodging*

Package Tours: Karen Ballard, IDC

Marketing brochures: E/S Drake, ITC funds

Festival Housing: Mike DeBoer, [www.InIdaho.com](http://www.InIdaho.com) reservation service; Donna Benfield, Rexburg Chamber of Commerce; or possibly organize a local housing database and maintain it at the Chamber of Commerce

#### *Transportation among regional communities*

Resources: Hailey—Erin Hart, Wood River Medical Center; (NICE) North ID Community Express

### **Community involvement and energy**

As mentioned above, we were struck by the dedication and enthusiasm of Weiser residents as they tackle community projects. From the seniors and others who help out with the pancake breakfast during Fiddle Festival to the volunteers contributing to the Heritage Center restoration and the salvation of local historic buildings, Weiser should be proud of its can-do spirit and accomplishments.

**Resource Idea:** Weiser, like many towns, could benefit from a more unified, community-driven vision for its future. A natural first step is to develop a strategic working plan reflecting grassroots support and involvement. This plan might be both descriptive (identifying key issues to be addressed, listing assets to be protected and identifying the tools and resources at your disposal) and prescriptive (specifying the desired goals and steps to implementation, and delegating responsibilities). One of the plan's components could map out a strategy for recruiting new volunteers while retaining existing volunteers and avoiding burnout.

### **Resources and suggestions**

John Bertram, Dick Gardner, Lynn Cameron, Mary Lee Wood as facilitators

Capital Campaign workshops—ID Association of Fundraising Professionals—Kristin Bell

Idaho Heritage Trust: Gaetha Pace

Idaho Historical Society: Steve Guerber

National Community Conservation Corp: Bev Krum

Idaho Commission on the Arts: Kathleen Keys, Maria Carmen Gambliel

## Weiser Community Survey Results

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Weiser residents completed 142 of the “what’s good about your city” surveys. The majority of the surveys were mailed out by the city and returned by citizens at or subsequent to the time of the community review. Some surveys were completed concurrently with citizen interviews for the separate community input questionnaire. Questions on the survey cover a wide variety of topics, from infrastructure, schooling, and safety concerns to quality of life, housing, and employment. On the survey they are grouped into major interest categories, starting with public works and ending with employment opportunities.

The 142 respondents gave a fairly balanced account of opinions on the various topics. Each of the 60 survey questions allowed for a response of “good,” “fair,” “poor,” or “do not know.” The total number of “good” responses was 2614, or 31% of the total. The total number of “fair” responses was 2992, or 35%. The total number of “poor” responses was 976, or 11% of the total. The total number of “do not know” responses was 350, or 4% of the total. There were also 145 unanswered questions, or questions marked invalidly (multiple answers was a common reason for invalidating responses). Review of the results shows a fair number of discernable trends.

By the following shows of “good” responses, residents were very pleased with: Traffic Conditions (96 “good” responses), Fire Protection Services (91), Ambulance Service (95), Access to the Hospital (99), Churches Active in the Community (99), Banking and Financial Services (88). Youth marked the most “good” responses about the Churches Active in the Community (38). Adults marked the most “good” responses about the Ambulance Service (71).

Results demonstrate a few areas of community concern as well. By the following shows of “poor” responses, residents were displeased with:

- ❑ **City Night Life (92), Recreation for Teenagers (81), Variety and Quality of Goods in Stores (85), and Quality of Available Jobs (90).**
- ❑ **Youth marked the most “poor” responses about the Recreation for Teenagers (41).**
- ❑ **Adults marked the most “poor” responses about the Night Life (54).**
- ❑ **Numerous “do not know” responses to several questions indicate an opportunity to educate citizens about: Availability of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Programs (47), Adult Education Opportunities (40), and Availability of Day Care for Children (42).**
- ❑ **Youth marked the most “do not know” responses about the Responsiveness of the Local Government (22).**
- ❑ **Adults marked the most “do not know” responses about the Availability of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Programs (29).**

Through the survey, Weiser residents identified a number of things they feel good about, other things that concern them, and some items that they require more information about. The raw data is as follows:

### What's Good About Your Community?

Below are items that may be important to a town. Be absolutely honest. How do you rate your town? In answering the questions below, place a check mark in the proper column if it applies to your community.

	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know	N/A
1. Streets & Roads	47	77	16	0	2
2. Traffic Conditions	96	39	1	0	6
3. Parking Downtown	44	58	31	1	8
4. Police Protection	65	51	12	7	7
5. Crime Prevention Programs	27	64	19	26	6
6. Fire Protection	91	31	2	11	7
7. Garbage Collection & Disposal	86	34	4	14	4
8. Water Supply	51	56	16	13	6
9. Sewage Collection & Disposal	69	40	5	22	6
10. Flood Control Measures	37	49	20	28	8
11. Community Parks & Playgrounds	72	47	17	3	3
12. Long-Range Planning	11	44	43	36	8
13. Planning & Zoning	9	53	40	32	8
14. Night Life	3	21	92	16	5
15. Recreation for Adults	20	57	48	14	3
16. Recreation for Teenagers	14	32	81	11	5
17. Recreation for Children 12 & Under	32	55	37	13	5
18. Library	74	45	11	8	4
19. Arts & Cultural Opportunities	17	48	49	13	5
20. Ambulance Service	95	33	1	9	4
21. Availability of Emergency Care	77	46	5	7	7
22. Access to Hospital	99	39	2	0	2
23. Availability of Doctors	82	44	10	4	2
24. Availability of Dentists	58	55	13	9	7
25. Availability of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Prgms.	10	33	46	47	6
26. Availability of Senior Services	58	49	2	29	3
27. Availability of Senior Housing Options	44	46	10	34	8
28. Availability of Rental Housing Options	24	59	26	26	7
29. Condition of Rental Housing	9	58	36	33	6
30. Availability of Homes to Purchase	44	56	15	21	6
31. Condition of Owner-Occupied Housing	26	79	10	22	5
32. Condition of School Buildings	73	56	3	5	5
33. Quality of Elementary Education	81	38	3	15	5
34. Quality of Junior High & High School Education	69	44	6	16	7

<b>What's Good About Your Community?</b>					
(continued).	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>N/A</b>
35. Vocational Education-Job Training Opportunities	12	40	51	34	5
36. Adult Education Opportunities	8	29	60	40	4
37. Appearance of Neighborhoods	19	95	23	0	5
38. Appearance of Downtown	66	63	10	0	3
39. Appearance of Public Buildings	55	73	9	0	5
40. Accessibility of Community for the Disabled	26	62	21	26	6
41. Appearance of Gateways Into Community	11	54	56	13	8
42. Welcome Given to Newcomers	39	45	31	22	5
43. Friendly & Neighborly People	83	47	8	0	4
44. Acceptance of Minorities	48	60	11	15	8
45. Progressive Community Spirit	45	59	17	11	10
46. Responsiveness of Local Government	20	53	25	34	8
47. Community Civic Organizations	43	51	11	31	6
48. Cooperation Between Community & Civic Groups	36	43	19	37	7
49. Community Involvement in Decision-Making	11	53	43	28	7
50. Diversity in Community Leadership	17	47	36	34	8
51. Churches Active in Community	99	27	7	7	2
52. Availability of Day Care for Children	26	47	20	42	8
53. Number & Quality of Eating Places	28	62	44	1	7
54. Variety & Quality of Goods in Stores	12	40	85	2	3
55. Banking & Financial Services	88	43	4	2	5
56. Local Newspaper Service	59	60	19	1	4
57. Hotel & Motel Accommodations	14	62	48	8	10
58. Variety of Local Industry	4	45	71	15	7
59. Business Involvement with Community	31	64	21	16	11
60. Quality of Available Jobs	0	32	90	12	8



## Weiser Community Interview Responses

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### **What are our strengths and assets that make Weiser a special place to work, live, play, and raise a family?**

- Great schools. Know the teachers through volunteering and mentoring a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader.
- National Fiddle Contest.
- Schools. Good+++.
- Quietness.
- Good place to raise families.
- No gangs.
- Willingness to take chances.
- Local recreation.
- Affordability.
- Architecture (old homes, etc.)
- Returning citizens (perspective returning).
- Close proximity to larger cities – location.
- Fishing and hunting access.
- Good infrastructure (water, sewer, electric).
- People are friendly and are willing to work together.
- Good place to raise children.
- Medical providers.
- Good parks.
- Low crime rate.
- Weiser folk return home.
- Historic resources.
- Good weather.
- Recreation (boating and fishing).
- Downtown Revitalization (lights).
- Independence, good climate, small town, good schools, fiddler contest.
- The senior center is a wonderful social and support system.
- Positive change since childhood (streets, Vendome Center).
- Great place to raise kids.
- Schools are fantastic.
- Rural life – 20 acres.
- Good schools.
- Attracted from Seattle.
- Labor force – great. Long-time employees (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation employees).
- \$11-12/hour (level and bonus).
- People that live here are wonderful.
- Wonderful doctors and hospital

- Cost of living is low.
- Great school system and teachers.
- Proximity to outdoor recreation
- Lots to do here.
- Good place for kids.
- Safe and secure, walkable.
- People are very nice overall.
- Quiet town.
- Easy to find work.
- No gangs.
- Quiet and peaceful.
- Good schools.
- Everyone knows everyone – small.
- School system is awesome. (Boys went from C's and D's to honor roll.)
- Need more activities for kids in the summer in addition to swimming pool.
- Saw an opportunity for a competitive grocery store.
- People are friendly, hard working, small town care.
- The youth felt valued by their community if they were involved in sports.
- The youth were asked if they would return to Weiser and less than half answered positively. (Their main concern was lack of opportunities, employment, etc.)
- Good communication, community supportive of sports / athletes.
- The people are united and very friendly.
- Lived here since 1928.
- Low crime.
- Friendly, helpful community.
- Really like the town restoration projects and preservation of buildings.
- Rural environment.
- Services in place (hospital, etc.).
- Weather is mild.
- Easy access for recreation (hunt, fish, etc.).
- Size (small).
- Friendliness of people.
- People come together to help others.
- Nice knowing a variety of people have hometown closeness.
- Know everyone.
- Good sense of “buy local” where possible.
- Feel safe here.
- Very little going for it right now.
- Town itself is a very nice place to look at.
- Presently (past 3 years) has a very good mayor and city council.
- Have been proactive and encouraging to businesses.
- Town has a strong history.
- Area is an affordable place to live.

- Of senior high school class, 80% are involved in extracurricular activities...2/3 work outside the home.
- Sense of good will about employers.
- Additional high school seniors' comments: 1) would participate in government if asked; 2) This is the first time we have been asked for input about the community; 3) Proud of community. Caring, inclusive. Community supports sports programs and youth organizations; 4) Community fearful of kids "on the loose" (back to skateboarding and "hanging out"); 5) Need another grocery store. No competition or brand variety.
- Retirement and pre-retirement support systems.
- Health care and hospital (\$1 mil. payroll).
- Weather is mildest in state ("banana belt").
- People – enthusiasm, supportive, participatory, churches active, service clubs, community support, library, best in state for community this size.
- Gateway to Reno (1 day each), Portland, Canadian border.
- City staff is tremendous as well as county.
- Small town attributes / personal safety.
- Schools good.
- Have a lot of sense of identity.
- Not having to worry about safety to self and family security and safety.
- Not alone in raising kids, community helps.
- Country living, rural heritage - elbow room if you want it.
- Great schools, teachers care, community supports.
- Great community supports.
- Great community theater open to new members.
- Friendly – OK to ask directions. Noise pollution = hollering, "hello".
- Affordable golf.
- Technology support. Local phone service is expanding service-DSL.
- Camaraderie among business community networking.
- Employers that care about their employees.
- Emerging drug prevention control programs.
- Cultural diversity.
- Friendly and fair public safety guys-common sense.
- Old Time Fiddle contest and heritage and cultural events.
- Great football tradition.
- Great location for football field.
- Short commute to anywhere / lower stress / slower pace no road rage.
- Doing business with your neighbors.
- Being able to walk between places.
- Good school system.
- Great health care.
- Knowledge of client base.
- Business rents are lower
- Can send employees out for training to Boise and TVCC.
- Best underused airport.

- Volunteerism - many step forward.
- Beautiful town, pretty valley, clean living too.
- City parks are a plus.
- Vendome community center.
- Friendliness of people you deal with.
- Flexibility in work schedules.
- Climate is a plus (no snow, etc.).
- Personal service / networking / great local knowledge.
- Stable workforce.
- Safety (public and personal).
- Equality in tax brackets.
- Easier support for small business activity / start-up.
- Relative geographic isolation supports strong community identity.
- Close proximity to mountains (outdoor recreation).
- Location: proximity to Boise metro - enjoy “country life”.
- Good youth recreation.
- A community that welcomes you.
- Diverse faith community - great choices.
- Great community organizations.
- Small town atmosphere.
- Schools and teachers, great principals.
- Schools / small town / caring about children in general.
- Small town feeling and safety. Can let kids ride bike down the road, etc.
- Quiet and safe community. Can have doors open / friendly people.
- Like the schools and principals.

**What are the problems and challenges facing the City of Weiser in the short run? Long run?**

- Need more businesses. Little shops (i.e., The Dollar Store) just aren’t enough.
- Proximity to Oregon (no sales tax).
- Drugs.
- Lack of jobs. Low pay / not enough pay.
- Teen pregnancy.
- Resistance to change. “Cave people”.
- Electric – renegotiate municipal power supply.
- Deregulation of electricity.
- Lack of long-term planning.
- No neighborhood continuity.
- Lack of citizen involvement in local government.
- Quality of workforce – wages.
- Quality workforce going to Ontario for higher wages.
- Quality of workforce.
- Poor wages.

- Hard to fire person in small town.
- Limit transportation.
- Slum and blight (scruffy).
- Limited funds to improve environmental (treatment plant).
- Businesses not open on Saturday (mandates).
- Limited retail (i.e., clothing stores).
- Poor sidewalk condition and lack of.
- Some poor housing.
- Lack of loyalty to Weiser businesses.
- Gangs are here, contrary to comment.
- Need more businesses to locate here. It's too convenient to go to Ontario.
- Challenge – lost on implement store. Very difficult to keep businesses here.
- There are a lot of places where it is easier to make money. Hard to keep a business open and successful.
- Lack of blue-collar type jobs.
- People don't build enough personal assets.
- Weather (fog, wind, ice) – hard to ship during winter road conditions.
- Lack of skilled labor due to lack of unions.
- Lack of economic diversity for jobs.
- Need industry to keep young people here.
- Income levels are very low.
- Town was anti-growth. Resistance to change is a problem.
- Getting young folks to come back after college
- More effective city leadership. Focusing on priorities.
- Have to leave to shop in Ontario.
- Not enough jobs for those with little education.
- Not enough affordable housing
- Have to go to Ontario for groceries
- More jobs. Businesses more out. Need more ?? or something to get them home. Oregon is too close – can avoid sales tax.
- No growth (population). Not much for kids to get involved with.
- Getting the community involved to support the local businesses.
- Parking is not good.
- Lack of employment
- No activities besides sports.
- Nothing fun for the young people to do.
- Community doesn't seem to care about their issues (i.e., skateboard park). Don't have a mechanism to make their voices heard. (High school kids are typical in wanting to leave and broaden their horizons. Most don't see themselves returning to the community to live. – Issue: H.S. enrollment has dropped about 100 kids since 1996. Kids are very open. Enjoyed the opportunity to be listened to.
- 1 grocery store w/small selection.
- Oregon gateway into Weiser looks awful.
- Narrow street in and out of town. People park on it – not safe (Main St.)



- Seniors did not like the brick pavers downtown. No input was asked from the community before refurbishing downtown.
- Not enough opportunities.
- No transportation or bus service.
- No clothing shopping opportunities.
- More transportation opportunities for non-drivers (seniors).
- Lack of availability of sundry items after 5:30 pm.
- Economic environment – ag based.
- Competition of other communities and more stores. No taxes in Oregon.
- Not enough stores (retail).
- So close to Oregon border (20 minutes).
- Clothing people afraid to start business because of high failure rate, high prices – can't be competitive.
- More things for kids to do (teens).
- Lack of jobs for teens.
- Lack of resources to start a business.
- Need growth and industry.
- Small employment base.
- Everyone wants to go to Oregon because of sales tax.
- Have to be here a while before community supports you.
- Address the competitive disadvantage that Weiser businesses have vs. Oregon businesses.
- Weiser has lost 4-5 businesses just since 9/11.
- Few (high school students) plan to stay in Weiser after graduation. No career opportunity given as primary reason.
- Have to go to Ontario to skate board. Some have used Boise skateboard parks.
- Bad water ("If it's brown, drink it down. If it's black, send it back." – high school seniors).
- Can't roller blade around town. Kicked out of town.
- Clothing stores. Need shopping alternatives. High school seniors complimentary of thrift stores. A lot of "neat" stuff.
- Shopping, jobs, preserving the "shop local" next to "tax free" state.
- Additional employment can bring crime. Boise only 1 hour away for education and jobs.
- Job base – not diverse enough.
- Don't have young people going to college – too many drop out.
- Not high enough educated (?) coming back to community.
- Not keeping best and brightest.
- Jobs- not enough, too many low wages.
- Keeping downtown vital without empty stores.
- Need parking downtown.
- Offering older kids enough to do, constructive activities
- QUALITY MOTEL SPACE!!!
- What to do with waterfront property (sale yard and Mortimer's) window of opportunity upon us.
- Maximize city's investment in downtown and boulevard.
- Need to clean up junk yards, old cars, trash.

- Need stronger P & Z enforcement.
- More inclusion of Asian, Hispanic, and aging communities.
- Coordination of city and county planning process.
- Expand impact of Fiddle Festival-reach further.
- Keep young people here-or help them return.
- Appreciating ALL business.
- Lack of adequate programs for youth that are drug dependent-waiting lists.
- Also true for adult population.
- Threatened golf courses.
- Agriculture economy soft markets overseas competition.
- Pay scale for too much of the workforce is too low.
- Volunteerism-younger volunteers are not as available.
- Better utilization of development along new highway.
- Entryways into the community need to be cleaned up, beautiful, etc.
- Zoning and infrastructure for industry.
- Continue to value historic resources.
- Develop greater community appreciation for agriculture and agri-business-ditto for business community.
- Drugs-presence in community, facing squarely social issues, youth pressures, and enforcement, neighborhoods denial.
- Getting support for downtown events.
- Bring more business in so people stay and shop here, leave money earned here to support local communities.
- Taking care of kids outside schools-no recreation for families-clean, honest, fun, movie house, etc.
- Recreation for children, open up a show house for family nights out, etc.
- No stores for clothes, shoes. Limited places to eat-have to run to Ontario for nice dining.
- Business promotion, business support, community support: need to fix up old buildings to look better, a grant? For the disrepair even for unowned buildings.
- Family activities for kids.

**What would you like to see the City of Weiser accomplish in the next five (5) – ten (10) years?**

- Competition with other communities who are drawing our businesses.
- 200 new jobs with decent pay.
- Vocational training.
- Create partnership with TVCC.
- Affluent (vibrant) downtown.
- More office space.
- Back off on off-street parking for new construction.
- “Soften” two-hour parking limit.
- Programs for skilled job training
- Quality of workforce.

- Job skills (vocational and retail).
- Service industry.
- Form a “storm water citizens’ committee” to work with city.
- More retail and varied shopping opportunities.
- National Fiddlers’ Hall of Fame in downtown Weiser.
- Playground committee can accomplish goals and have support.
- Full-service grocery store with competitive prices.
- More industry.
- Improvement of streets has made dramatic progress and the Vendome Center are excellent beginnings. Would like to see that continue.
- Would like to see continues progress with \*\*\*\*\*.
- More manufacturing jobs.
- Transportation – pave roads. Widen road to freeway.
- See more shopping / commerce opportunities.
- Anything!
- Need to keep golf course open desperately.
- Needs some young thinking to change.
- Need a new business that exports.
- Keep hospital open and profitable.
- Condominiums / housing options for senior housing
- Need family entertainment place with no drinking.
- Keep progress going.
- Keep maintenance up.
- More businesses come in.
- More places / activities for teenagers. There’s nothing for them besides sports.
- Need a place for family entertainment. Especially at night without drinking.
- More low income, single family housing (i.e., for workers at Appleton Produce)
- More job training for adults (i.e., computers)
- More stores (shoes, clothing).
- Decent paying jobs.
- More jobs.
- Entertainment.
- A movie theater.
- Like to see the City of Weiser grow. Like the police run after-school program. Would like to see theater reopen. Need more adult activities besides bowling alley and bars. Need to advertise alcohol and drug prevention programs.
- Movie theater.
- Rec center.
- Youth center.
- Employment opportunities.
- More business opportunities and a transportation system, especially for seniors.
- Small niche businesses w/atmosphere.
- Resources to support start up businesses so they can grow (i.e., Rodex Industries in Midvale).
- Specialty shops.

- Vital downtown.
- More business support resources.
- Affordable housing (1<sup>st</sup> time homes).
- Attract businesses (can't purchase clothes, etc. here).
- Improve signage as enter town.
- Let travelers know what businesses are downtown.
- Develop Greenbelt.
- Full service RV park to get some of Hwy. 95 travelers to stop.
- Develop river frontage.
- Feels this is an untapped resource (i.e., restaurant, RV park, boat dock).
- Need to attract retail business.
- Develop Mortimer Park.
- Picnicking / fish pond.
- Think working on building on building restoration would be good.
- City should "lighten up" on businesses locating along Hwy. 95.
- Mortimer Island developed into community park.
- Swimming pool and outdoor recreation and sports.
- Youth facility developed – community center.
- "River House" along river.
- Need to start mail order business.
- Develop another block of commercial between downtown and Highway 95.
- Create a better environment to attract better businesses other than small "mom and pop" stores.
- Capitalize on "planning" investments-create and agree upon action planning to ensure implementation.
- Additional fine dining.
- Continuing education "Adult Ed" through: local facilities and education partners, adequate access to ESL.
- Ridge to river run.
- Clean good drinking water.
- Quality housing developments.
- Expanded community center.
- Non-agricultural diversification-higher paying jobs.
- Movie theater.
- Increased shopping and services that reflects a self-sufficient economy and sense of community.
- Weiser is not referred to or known as a "retirement community".
- Good pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, etc.
- Better communication between city, county, boards, and civic groups to move vision forward, need action planning-commitment and follow through.
- Long range plan that city, county, and citizens support.
- Bridge to bridge plan that includes park, parking, job creation, boat friendly, "casino boats", tunnel under railroad.
- Attractive gateways to town helps both visitors and self-esteem.

- OVERNIGHT ACCOMODATIONS: Multiplies business, lodging for Fiddle Festival and Vendome.
- Varied housing in living options for seniors downsizing.
- Parking down town, people might circle once and leave.
- Pay attention to needs of child and family on weekends and after school. If you can't afford gas to go to Ontario, what? Park every day gets boring, things to do that don't cost much.
- Skating rink, movie house, support for business, support for towns business.
- Better parking downtown, support for business from the town.
- Promote downtown's business, give Power Co. Back to Idaho Power or fix so no power surges, have lost computer: restore downtown or make into quaint antique area.
- More business so people won't go to Ontario.

## Weiser Development, Retention, & Quality of Life Survey

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# Weiser

### Community & Economic Development, Business Retention, & Quality of Life Survey

1) Size of your firm (please provide the exact number of employees if known):

Large Firm _____ (50 or more employees)	Intermediate Firm _____ (26-50 employees)	Small Firm _____ (0-25 employees)
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2) Number of employees who live in Weiser: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Number of employees who live in Washington County: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Number of employees who live in Payette County: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Number of employees who live outside the counties: \_\_\_\_\_

6) Employment, in the last three years is:

- A) Increasing
- B) Decreasing
- C) Same

7) Sales, in the last three years are:

- A) Increasing
- B) Decreasing
- C) Same

8) Goods are primarily sold:

- A) In Weiser, Washington, or Payette County
- B) In Idaho
- C) Outside Idaho

9) Number of years in operation: \_\_\_\_\_

10) Stability of business:      No opinion      Poor      Fair      Good      Excellent

11) Overall opinion of Weiser as a place to do business:

No opinion      Poor      Fair      Good      Excellent



12) Satisfaction with Business Climate Factors:

	Improve	OK	Pleased
Permit Processes			
Tax Rates			
Building Codes			
Planning & Zoning			
Labor			
Proximity to Suppliers			
Proximity to Customers			
Land & Site Costs			
Other Business & Professional Services			
Financial services			

13) Factors Important to Choosing and/or Remaining in the Community:

	Unnecessary	Convenient	Essential
Permit Processes			
Tax Rates			
Building Codes			
Planning & Zoning			
Labor			
Distribution/Collection Costs			
Proximity to Suppliers			
Proximity to Customers			
Land & Site Costs			
Business & Professional Services			

14) Quality of Public Services:

	Poor	Adequate	Good
Arts & Cultural Activities			
Recreation			
Schools/Education			
Community Appearance			
Police Protection			
Fire Protection			
Telephone			
Natural Gas			
Electricity			
Waste Disposal			
Sewer			
Water			

15) Cost of Public Services:

	Low	Fair	High
Arts & Cultural Activities			
Recreation			
Schools/Education			
Community Appearance			
Police Protection			
Fire Protection			
Telephone			
Natural Gas			
Electricity			
Waste Disposal			
Sewer			
Water			

16) Quality of Transportation Services:

	Poor	Adequate	Good
Air			
Rail			
Truck			

17) Cost of Transportation Services:

	Low	Fair	High
Air			
Rail			
Truck			

18) Of the community features listed below, please rank the FIVE features that are the most important to you as part of your community. *Only choose five.*

1 = most important, 2 = next most important, 3 = next, 4 = next, 5 = least important of your top five	
___ Arts & cultural activities	___ Employment and advancement opportunities
___ Medical services & facilities	___ Salary and wage level
___ Parks and recreation facilities	___ Citizen participation in local government
___ Low local tax rate	___ Youth activities and opportunities
___ Low crime rate	___ Level of local public services
___ Water quality & supply	___ Condition of roadways & sidewalks
___ Air quality	___ Shopping opportunities
___ Open spaces	___ Public education
___ Community appearance & beautification	___ Housing

19) Please rate the following subjects as you perceive them in your community.					
	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
A) Air quality					
B) Quality of drinking water					
C) Supply of water for household & business use					
D) Condition of Streets					
E) Parking in retail areas					
F) Parks and recreation facilities					
G) Availability/affordability of housing for sale					
H) Availability/affordability of rental housing					
I) Opportunity for citizen involvement in local government					
J) Level of community safety					
K) Employment opportunities					
L) Availability of leisure activities					
M) Availability of health services					
N) Open spaces and green areas					
O) Sewer treatment/disposal					
P) Fire protection					
Q) Public education					
R) Police protection					
S) Land use planning					
T) Noise level in you neighborhood					
U) Overall quality of life in your community					

20) Additional Thoughts:

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Thank you so much for your time and effort invested in improving your community!

## Advice, Assistance, and Available Community Funding:

The following resources can be supplemented by referring to the Idaho Department of Commerce's (IDOC) Advantage Handbook available online at [www.idoc.state.id.us](http://www.idoc.state.id.us) in the publications section under community development or in the 2001-2002 Small Business & Community Development Resource Directory available through the Association of Idaho Cities and the Idaho Rural Partnership.

In addition, the website cited above has application rules and forms for the Idaho Community Development Block Grant program, a Downtown Handbook to assist with downtown and main street revitalization projects, fire plans, public finance strategies, news updates, and other important community development information and resources.

A community review coordinator will contact you periodically following the community review to determine what additional assistance the visiting team may provide to you in realizing your community development objectives. Please feel free to contact members of the visiting team if you have follow up questions, comments, or require assistance in any way.

## **Infrastructure:**

- Small Business Development Council (SBDC)
- Idaho Department of Commerce (IDOC)
- Association of Idaho Recyclers
- Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR)
- Idaho Department of Health & Welfare (IDHW)
- Department of Parks
- Environmental Finance Center
- Consulting Engineers of Idaho
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development
- Division of Rural & Community Development
- ITC Grant Program
- National Main Street Program
- Idaho Rural Water Association (IRWA)
- Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
- University of Idaho Department of Agricultural Economics

- Association of Idaho Cities (AIC)
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- International Conference of Building Officials
- Idaho National Guard
- Small Business Development Loans

# Land Use & Community Design:

- Idaho Department of Transportation (ITD) Transportation Enhancement Program
- U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Jerome County
- Highway Districts
- Chamber of Commerce
- Historic Tax Credits
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
- Community Action Agency - HOME funds
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing
- Community Development Block Grants
- Idaho Housing and Finance Association (IHFA) Multi-Family Division
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Multi-Family Division
- Idaho Department of Commerce (IDOC)
- University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
- Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Idaho Department Environmental Quality (IDEQ)
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Panhandle Area Council (PAC)
- TEA-21 funds
- Idaho State Independent Living Council (Idaho SILC)
- Association of Idaho Cities (AIC)
- Idaho Association of Counties
- Other Cities

# Civic Life & Community Involvement:

- Idaho Council on Aging
- Idaho Department of Commerce (IDOC)
- Association of Idaho Cities (AIC)
- National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)
- Serve Idaho
- Search Institute's Healthy Youth Initiative
- America's Promise: the Alliance of Youth
- Youth Action Councils
- Governors Council on Aging
- YMCA - YWCA
- Gem Community Improvement Grants
- Service Club - Youth Activities
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- University of Idaho Forestry Lab
- University of Idaho Department of Art & Architecture
- University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
- Idaho Commission on the Arts (ICA)
- Advantage Club in North Idaho
- Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)
- Community Action Agency
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Senior Housing
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Local School Districts - Computer Labs
- Annenberg Foundation
- Qwest Education Fund
- Micron Foundation
- Albertson's Foundation
- Planning - Health Districts
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Association of Idaho Cities (AIC)
- Idaho Parks and Recreation



## Community Potential Matrix

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Attached is a matrix developed by Dr. Dick Gardner demonstrating numerous ways in which a community might add jobs to its economic base and assess its potential in comparison to other communities in the region or neighboring states.

Such assessments are intended as rough, qualitative guides to define regional and community strategic economic development objectives. This matrix and the subsequent description of each component can give local leaders a sense of the many different strategies that a town may employ to add jobs to a struggling economy. We hope it helps communities define in general terms how a given town's potential measures up against others in the region. The matrix can become a tool for productive community discussion about the future.

Some of the underlying criteria that determine potential, such as telecommunications infrastructure, community culture, and business recruitment, may be within the community's control. We invite community leaders to creatively devise ways to increase their potential. In addition, the matrix reveals patterns of potential for various ways to add jobs. This offers a sense of the kind of region we may move toward should funding for action steps become available. As reliance on the economic engines of natural resource industries lessen in the Inland Northwest, this matrix helps map progress toward a new West of more sustainable local economies.

<b>COMMUNITY MATRIX</b>					
	Community A	Community B	Community C	Community D	Community E
<b>DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY</b>					
1. Value-Added Agriculture					
2. Value-added Forest Products					
3. Value-Added Mining					
4. Business Retention and Expansion					
5. Plugging Retail Leakage					
6. Business Recruitment					
7. Entrepreneurship Dev.					
8. Local/Regional Tourism					
9. Pass-Through Visitor Services					
10. Destination Tourism					
11. Transportation Hub/Warehousing					
12. Attracting Retirees					
13. Attracting Lone Eagles					
14. Telecommunications Business					
15. Environmental Restoration					
16. Health Care					
17. Bedroom Community					
18. Attracting/Retaining Government Offices					
19. Culture/Arts/Historic Center					
Each Community may be ranked in ‘potential’ according to qualitative criteria.					
Each community score should be validated by local economic development practitioners and leaders.					

## **Diversification Strategy Detail**

### **1. Value-Added Agriculture**

Definition: Jobs can be created in agriculture by creating enterprises or new profit centers that add value to regional exports by 1) adding new crops or livestock, 2) creating new products, 3) addressing or developing new markets, or 4) lowering production costs.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Diversity of crops, amount of irrigated row crops, number of farms in county, relative size of agriculture in local economy

Implied Implementation Actions: Marketing cooperatives, direct marketing like farmer's markets, training on alternative crops, revolving loan fund.

### **2. Value-added Forest Products**

Definition: Jobs can be created in the region's forests by creating enterprises that add value to regional forest exports by 1) harvesting new forest products, 2) creating new products, 3) addressing or developing new markets, or 4) lowering production costs.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Relative size of existing forest industry.

Implied Implementation Actions: Inventory special forest products. Form secondary wood products manufacturing network. Organize demonstrations of new technologies. Feasibility studies. Marketing cooperatives. Awareness of environmental concerns.

### **3. Value-Added Mining**

Definition: Jobs can be created in the region's mineral sector by creating new enterprises that add value to regional exports by removing new substances from the earth

Criteria To Measure Potential: Presence of existing mining industry.

Implied Implementation Actions: Explore mineral inventory, conduct feasibility study. Lava rock, silica sand, semi-precious stones, etc offer opportunities to add value. Compare costs and benefits with environmental concerns.

### **4. Business Retention and Expansion**

Definition: By analyzing what all existing businesses in a community need to thrive and expand, communities can find ways to grow new jobs.

Criteria To Measure Potential: All communities have good potential from this strategy. The only limiting factors are how long ago an interview program was done and the vigor to which follow-up actions were pursued. Larger communities will have a deeper set of businesses with which to work.

Implied Implementation Actions: Conduct & analyze business interviews, make needed infrastructure improvements, fill specific employee training needs, develop business finance resources

### **5. Plugging Retail Leakage/Import Substitution**

Definition: By identifying the extent to which residents are leaving the community to purchase goods and services, communities can plug leaks and increase the circulation of economic activity within town.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Isolated communities pay a higher travel cost for securing goods and services and may have more potential. Larger communities may also have more potential here.

Implied Implementation Actions: Conduct and analyze consumer surveys. Targeted recruitment of needed services.

### **6. Business Recruitment**

Definition: A combination of push factors from the existing location and pull factors towards the new will sometimes lead businesses to move or expand to a new community, instantly bringing new jobs.

Criteria To Measure Potential: 1) Good access to markets, 2) Educated, skilled labor force, 3) ready, affordable industrial sites, 4) High quality infrastructure and amenities, 5) Financing, and 6) Appreciative, pro-business attitude (Source: *Harvesting Hometown Jobs*). Land costs, labor costs, labor availability, utility costs, transportation costs (distance to markets and to critical inputs), education, health care, and community amenities.

Implied Implementation Actions: Commercial property or building survey, inquiry response package, targeted recruitment, advertising campaigns, industrial park development

## **7. Entrepreneurship Development**

Definition: Entrepreneurs are the creative spark that brings labor, capital, technology, and market information together for a new business venture. Most entrepreneurs have particular strengths, e.g. engineering or sales, but not all the skills needed for a successful business. Entrepreneurship programs may both increase business startup rates and decrease failure rates.

Criteria To Measure Potential: More potential to fill classes with larger communities. All communities have potential entrepreneurs. Increased potential with number of diversification options.

Implied Implementation Actions: Organize business start-up classes. Target women and minority populations under-represented in business community. Business planning technical assistance. Various development finance programs. Peer lending programs. Individual Development Accounts.

## **8. Local/Regional Tourism**

Definition: All communities have some potential to help visitors linger longer in their town, and thus make local purchases. Tourism is called the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest industry in the US.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Proximity to and capacity for leisure and recreation resources.

Implied Implementation Actions: Tourism inventory. Better signage to attractions. Create local lodging facilities. Interpretive materials for attractions. Develop joint marketing materials. Community celebrations. Sports tournaments. Organizing group reunions. Farm and ranch recreation. Feasibility studies. Rails-to-trails. Industry tours, environmental tours.

## **9. Pass-Through Visitor Services**

Definition: Some towns are situated where many people are passing through. Jobs can be created by providing things these people need to help them stop, pass time, and make purchases.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Location on transportation corridor, size of visitor stream

Implied Implementation Actions: Survey and analysis of needed visitor services. Develop public restrooms, parks and picnic areas.

## **10. Destination Tourism**

Definition: A few communities have the natural or man-made attractions or some event that creates a destination for visitors.

Implied Implementation Actions: Feasibility studies. Farm and ranch recreation. Outfitters and guides services.

## **11. Transportation Hub/Warehousing**

Definition: Where goods are transferred from one transportation mode to another, opportunities exist to add jobs by expanding the presence of transport firms and warehousing functions, e.g. Reno, NV.

Criteria To Measure Potential: On major transportation corridor, a natural stop in isolated country, adjacent to larger city

Implied Implementation Actions: Survey and analysis of transportation patterns. Targeted marketing to transportation firms and potential wholesalers. Assess zoning needs and infrastructure impact.

## **12. Attracting Retirees**

Definition: Roughly 5% of new retirees move between states to re-locate. An additional several million retirees have no permanent address and live in recreation vehicles. Retired migrants tend to have higher income, more education, and better health than average for their age.

Criteria To Measure Potential: High natural and cultural amenities, desirable climate (defined as four seasons, long growing season, high number of sunny days, low numbers of extreme days of heat or cold) low cost of living, access to health care, sense of personal security, walkable downtown, friendly small-town atmosphere, access to commercial airlines

Implied Implementation Actions: Targeted marketing to individuals familiar with community, e.g. relatives or friends of residents, alumni, military service, repeat tourism visitors. Response kit development. Targeted advertising. Use of local retirees as ambassadors. Partnerships with developers.

## **13. Attracting Lone Eagles**

Definition: Increasing numbers of people have the education, skills, and contacts to carry their living wherever they are and are limited only by proximity to a shipping/packaging facility in their region.

Entrepreneurs related to information technology have drastically increased the numbers of Lone Eagles, as has telecommuting.

Criteria To Measure Potential: 1) Accepts newcomers and is open to change, 2) demonstrates community pride and optimism, 3) Access to open space and recreation amenities, 4) Access to cultural amenities, 5) Interesting personality or standing, 6) Good housing at reasonable rates, 7) Sense of personal security, 8) Good K-12 schools, 9) Access to post-secondary ed and training, 10) primary health care and access to higher levels of care, 11) Small business friendly, 12) Minimizes tax and regulatory burdens, 13) work-ready labor force, 14) Advanced telecomm, 15) wireless telephony, 16) Cable TV, 17) Access to Internet, 18) Overnight express mail, 19) Access to commercial airlines, 20) Same-day delivery of major national newspapers (Source: Center for the New West)

Implied Implementation Actions: Community telecommunications assessment. Targeted marketing to individuals familiar with community, e.g. alumni, military service, repeat tourism visitors. Response kit development. Targeted advertising. Development of ancillary services Lone Eagles require. “Smart” building or business incubator development

#### **14. Telecommunications Business**

Definition: Businesses that rely on information technology are increasingly footloose. They can either be attracted to a community or home-grown.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Same as Lone Eagles, with greater emphasis on work force and high speed telecomm services.

Implied Implementation Actions: Community telecommunications assessment. Response kit development. Targeted advertising. Development of ancillary services telecommunications businesses require. “Smart” building or business incubator development. Development of broadband telecomm service.

#### **15. Environmental Restoration**

Definition: Fires, forest and range health, mining, and brown field sites create opportunities for employment in environmental restoration.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Forest health, range health, mining, fire damage, Superfund sites.

Implied Implementation Actions: Marketing restoration contract opportunities locally. Retraining workers. Organizing workers and businesses into networks to meet contract opportunities. Grant applications. Partnering with higher education or agencies.

#### **16. Health Care**

Definition: The provision of health care can be a major provider of jobs, as well as a key condition for businesses and individuals to locate. Local hospitals are often among the top employers in a community. A doctor may support as many as 5-8 other jobs.

Criteria To Measure Potential:

Implied Implementation Actions: recruitment and retention of primary care providers, loan repayment programs, health clinic improvements, EMS improvements, pharmacist recruitment

#### **17. Bedroom Community**

Definition: Some communities are so close to larger cities that their natural niche is building a base of residents who will bring income home to their communities.

Criteria To Measure Potential: Distance to larger city, transportation links, size of neighboring community

Implied Implementation Actions: Consumer survey to identify what goods and services are preferred locally, links to construction and financing firms in development industry, develop local recreation programs, strengthen schools, parks and trail development

#### **18. Attracting/Retaining Government Offices**

Definition: District and regional offices of state and federal agencies can be a major source of professional and stable jobs. Keeping them open can be as important as getting new ones.

Implied Implementation Actions: Work with political decision-makers

#### **19. Culture/Arts/Historic Center**

Definition: Communities can systematically build on cultural/historical attractions and arts businesses to create jobs and build unique identity.

Implied Implementation Actions: Ethnic celebrations, B&B development, arts fairs, arts cooperatives, cross-marketing in local stores. Historic re-creations/living history exhibits. Development of e-commerce for arts products.



# Weiser Community Review Visiting Team Members

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## Community Review Coordinators

### **Bob Ford**

Manager, Rural Development  
Idaho Department of Commerce  
(208) 334-2470

Bob has a B.S. from the University of Idaho, an M.S. in management from the University of Southern California, has worked in planning and regional economic development since 1979, and has headed up marketing, business development, and the Gem Community Program.

### **Michael Shaw**

Human Rights Coordinator  
Association of Idaho Cities  
(208) 344-8594

Michael has a B.A. from Colorado College, an MBA from Northwest Nazarene University, and has worked as a child therapist, civil rights investigator, human resource specialist, and consultant. He currently facilitates statewide inter-cultural events and provides leadership, conflict resolution and facilitation, community building, hate crime, racial profiling, and diversity training to city officials, schools, and human rights groups across Idaho.

### **Erik Kingston**

Housing Resource Coordinator  
Idaho Housing and Finance Association  
(208) 331-4706

Erik created and manages IHFA's Housing Information & Referral Center, a research and referral resource for the state, and coordinates the statewide *Five-Year Strategic Plan for Housing and Community Development*. He is currently involved in Boise's Open Space planning and the Treasure Valley Partnership. Formerly, he was with Boise Public Works, served as Executive Director of Wasatch Fish & Gardens (Utah), and on the Utah Arts Council's Performing Arts Tour and Folk Arts Program.

### **Brian Dale**

Community Builder  
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development  
(208) 334-1990

Brian has a B.A. from Westminster College (in Missouri), has worked with many local and national disability councils, advisory committees, and coalitions, and has directed work of the Utah Statewide Independent Living Council and Salt Lake Impact 2002 Olympic Committee.

**Dwight Johnson**

Interim Executive Director, Idaho Rural Partnership  
Public Affairs Manager, Idaho Department of Labor  
(208) 334-6402

Dwight has a B.A. in Political Science from Brigham Young University, a Masters of Public Administration from Boise State University, and has worked on the Governor's Welfare Reform Advisory Council and Workforce Development Council. Dwight has experienced legislative successes in Workforce Development, Employment Security and Wage and Hour law, Farmworker Minimum Wage law, and Farm Labor Contractor Licensing.

**Dr. Richard Gardner, PhD**

Principal  
Bootstrap Solutions  
(208) 389-1401  
(208) 859-8878 c

Dick has degrees in resource economics from Colorado State, Minnesota, and Michigan State, and his consulting firm specializes in rural development, economics, strategic planning, and group facilitation. He has years of experience in rural Idaho through his work with the Division of Financial Management and Idaho Rural Partnership.

**Dr. James Nelson, PhD**

Ag., Economic & Rural Sociology Dept.  
University of Idaho  
(208) 885-5217

Jim has been an agricultural economics professor at the University of Idaho since 1990, and is the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. He has degrees in agricultural economics from Texas Tech University and Oklahoma State University. Jim also has extensive experience in areas such as Farmland Values, Economic Development, Economics of Rural Community Services, Impacts of Higher Education on State and Local Economies, Rural Economic Analysis of Alternative Irrigation Systems, and Economic Impacts of Agriculture on State and Local Economies.

**Jim Birdsall**

Consultant  
(208) 338-0983

Jim has over 23 years of community development experience and has operated his own consulting practice in this arena since 1986. In addition to public sector planning, project development, and grant writing, Mr. Birdsall has significant experience assisting community based groups with various strategic planning and program development initiatives. Jim has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Southwest Missouri State University.

**Local Economic Development Focus Team****William Stewart**

Executive Director  
Valley Vision 2001  
(208) 799-9083

Bill became the first executive director of Valley Vision, Inc. in August 1997, moving to the Lewis-Clark Valley from the Seattle area where he helped launch a workforce brokerage service under the Seattle Jobs Initiative. His economic development career spans 19 years and has included positions in

the private, public and non-profit sectors in both Washington and Idaho. He has directed three economic development councils, served as assistant director of the Washington Department of Trade & Economic Development (including statewide director of Team Washington) during the Gardner Administration, and was a business development specialist for Washington Water Power – now Avista Corporation – for more than six years. During this period he also acquired, developed and sold five small businesses of his own. Bill obtained his BA degree in Journalism and Political Science from Eastern Washington University in 1973.

**Jim Hogge**

State Director  
Idaho Small Business Development Center  
(208) 426-3799

Jim has been with the ISBDC since 1992 and has served as the state director of the agency since July 1995. The ISBDC provides high-quality consulting and training services to improve the success of entrepreneurs in Idaho. Jim obtained a B.S. in chemistry from the College of Idaho in 1971, a M.B.A. from the University of West Florida in 1991, and a B.S. in accounting from Boise State University in May 1993.

**Daryl Moser**

Business Cooperative Services Director  
USDA Rural Development  
(208) 378-5615

Daryl, an Oregon State University graduate, manages the administration of the business development and cooperative services programs. The program goal is to promote a dynamic business environment in rural Idaho, and it works in partnership with the private sector and community-based organizations to provide financial assistance and business planning. It funds projects that create or preserve quality jobs and/or promote a clean rural environment. RBS Cooperative Services technical assistance and research programs help rural residents form new cooperative businesses and improve the operations of user-owned businesses.

**Leslie Toombs**

Economic Development Specialist/Planner  
Sage Community Resources  
(208) 322-7033

Leslie works with the city and county governments within a ten county area of Southwest Idaho assisting in the planning and implementation of economic development strategies and job creation projects. Leslie has over 15 years of experience in community and economic development planning while working for state and municipal governments in Alaska and for a statewide development corporation. Leslie served for three years as statewide manager for the State of Alaska Weatherization Assistance and Home Rehabilitation Programs.

**Maria Aguilar**

Employment & Training Consultant  
Idaho Migrant Council  
(208) 642-9304

Maria worked for the Weiser School District as a tutor for migrant children for 13 years, then left the school district to study Bi-lingual Education at Boise State University. She has worked for the Department of Health and Welfare as an interpreter, and for Job Service as a Customer Service Representative. Maria has been in her current position with Idaho Migrant Council for 2½ years, lives in Weiser with her family, and enjoys the life a small city provides.

**Lisa Wolfe**

Enterprise Facilitator

Washington Adams Vision for Entrepreneurship

(208) 414-1906

Lisa is a business coach for entrepreneurs planning to start or expand a business in Adams or Washington Counties. She has recently completed the initial Sirolli Institute training in Enterprise Facilitation and expects to be a Certified Enterprise Facilitator by October of 2003. Her position is one of the regional rural economic development positions created last year by Governor Kempthorne's Rural Initiative. She brings a diverse background to her current role. After earning her BA from Harvard University, she spent several years working with Fortune 500 senior executives as a Management Consultant. Returning to her own rural hometown she worked as a Business Development Manager for a local Lockheed Martin manufacturing division and several other small businesses during start up or expansion before following her husband back to his native Idaho.

**Land Use Planning Team****John Bertram**

President

Planmakers Planning & Urban Design

(208) 336-1438

John has helped Idaho communities developing an area's character and identity since 1977, including Jerome's 1996 Comp. Plan, Oregon Trail and cultural facility development plans, city entrance beautification, scenic corridors, building restoration, & downtown renovations.

**Sabrina Bowman**

Community Development Specialist

City of Nampa

(208) 465-2224

Sabrina's job duties include managing Nampa's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, working with neighborhood groups and non-profit organizations, and special citizen outreach projects. Previous work experience includes campaign manager for State Controller, J.D. Williams's re-election campaign in 1998, Research Analyst in the State Controller's Office, and Consumer Protection Specialist in the State Attorney General's Office. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science/Communications from Boise State University. She is a certified grant administrator with the State of Idaho and is a graduate of the Northwest Community Development Institute.

**Pat L. Engel**

Planning Specialist

Sage Community Resources

(208) 322-7033, Ext. 234

Pat Engel is a Community Planning Specialist with Sage Community Resources, providing staffing resources to ten southwest Idaho counties. Pat has over twenty-five years of experience in both private and public environments including: community and transportation planning, economic development, grant writing and administration, technical and business resource development, web-based business support services, and community involvement facilitation.

## **Civic Life & Community Involvement Focus Team**

### **Nick Partin**

Rural Development Specialist (outreach)  
USDA Rural Development  
(208) 550-0187

Nick Partin has been involved in rural credit issues for more than 25 years. For the past 5 years work has focused on directing rural communities to the resources they need to sustain a viable community. Nick's college course work and career development includes study in education, computer science, Agricultural engineering, business law, credit analysis, ag and residential lending practices, supervision/management, real estate appraisal, residential construction, and community development. Nick has also devoted considerable time to area youth having been a 4-H leader, FFA supporter, and volunteer coach.

### **Celeste Becia**

Tourism Specialist  
Idaho Department of Commerce, Tourism Development Division  
(208) 334-2470

Celeste, a native of Juneau, Alaska has a B.S. degree from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and an M.B.A. from Washington State University. She has worked for the Idaho Department of Commerce in the Economic Development Division and is currently a consumer marketing specialist for the Division of Tourism Development.

### **Mary Lee Wood**

Consultant  
Lone Tree Consulting  
(208) 466-5525

Mary Lee, a trainer, facilitator, and consultant, has a B.S. in Agriculture, an MEd in counseling/guidance, and has worked as an Idaho Cooperative Extension System 4-H Youth Specialist in volunteer and leadership development programs and Leaders' Forums.

### **Deb Krum**

Asset Building Coordinator  
Association of Idaho Cities  
(208) 344-8594

Deb Krum serves as the Program Coordinator for the Association of Idaho Cities' statewide asset-building initiatives. She is actively involved in supporting local initiatives that focus on providing children and youth with the resources they need for successful living. Deb believes that programs alone won't address the crucial needs of young people - only time and devotion will.

### **Mandy De Castro**

Program Specialist  
Association of Idaho Cities  
(208) 344-8594

Mandy de Castro is the Program Specialist for the Association of Idaho Cities' statewide asset-building initiatives with Deb Krum. She works to equip and support communities to build assets for youth.

**Sean Wilson**

Community Outreach Worker

Governor's Coordinating Council for Families & Children

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Sean, a lifelong Idahoan, has an interdisciplinary B.A. in Business, Communication, and Political Science from the University of Idaho. He has served as Assistant Director of New Student Services at the University of Idaho and operates an internet business, Hornsales.com, a website specializing in professional custom saxophones. He and his musical partner frequently donate their time as musicians playing for young people in regional schools inspiring them through music, and Sean is active as a Commissioner with the Idaho Commission on the Arts.



## News Articles

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### Community development professionals visit Weiser

A diverse group of 23 community development professionals visited Weiser March 12-13, 2002 to participate in the 'Idaho Community Review,' a joint project spearheaded by the Association of Idaho Cities, the Idaho Department of Commerce, the Idaho Rural Partnership, and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.

These talented and experienced team members, who included Sabrina Bowman of the City of Nampa and Association of Idaho Cities Asset Building Coordinator Deb Krum, generously donated time, travel, and accommodation expenses to the project. Team members included statewide community design and planning consultants, city employees, state and federal agency representatives, and other Idaho leaders.



Weiser Mayor Don Stephens

After a welcome from Weiser Mayor Don Stephens, remarks about Weiser's history from author Betty Derig, team introductions, and an overview of the community review process and two day schedule, the team separated into groups and focused on three core interest areas identified by Weiser's leadership: Local Economic Development, headed by Washington County Commissioner Diana Thomas, Land Use Planning, headed by Weiser City Councilmember Amy McNight, and Civic Life & Community Involvement, headed by Weiser City Councilmember Layna Hafer. The team engaged in conversations with Weiser community leaders and citizens, toured the area, facilitated a town meeting to present their observations, and will provide a subsequent written report detailing the experience. The written report will include information collated during all phases of the review, a survey of Weiser residents, and resources available to Weiser in effecting positive change.



Utilizing Weiser's rich heritage, the current popularity of its annual Olde Time Fiddle Contest, natural features such as the Weiser River, and outstanding community architectural features will be critical components of the tourism, diversification, and local economic development strategies of this community in the coming five to ten years.

The Community Review program's goals are to provide objective recommendations, resources, and supplement Weiser's effort in developing and implementing local community development strategies. The community of Weiser arranged meeting sites, provided meals and transportation for the team, developed a review and tour schedule, promoted the review to foster excitement, and secured commitments to participate from local leaders and citizens. Hats off to Weiser city leaders and the other home team members for their willingness to share all aspects of their community, and being open to feedback, information, and ideas from the visiting team.



Weiser has a new community center located in the heart of its revitalized downtown, a vibrant senior center, and a diverse faith community who are active in projects such as a recently completed playground.

City leaders interested in scheduling a review in their community or seeking additional information may contact Michael Shaw of the Association of Idaho Cities at 344-8594, Bob Ford of the Idaho Department of Commerce at 334-2470, or Brian Dale of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development at 334-1990.

*March 11, 2002*

*Weiser Signal American*

*By David Trigueiro*

## **Weiser Invited to Review Past and Plan the Future**

For two days this week Weiser's community leaders and citizens will meet with teams of state and federal government planners to review the city's assets and plan for future economic and civic development.

Weiser will be the sixth Idaho town accepted for the extensive process developed by the Association of Idaho Cities, Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho Rural Partnership, and other municipal, state and federal agencies and representatives. It is designed to provide communities of less than 10,000 population an opportunity to engage in the kind of extensive evaluation planning process generally only available to larger urban centers said Michael Shaw, human rights coordinator for the cities' association. A visiting team of more than 25 economic planners and developers along with civic leaders and government representatives will meet with local leaders and tour local businesses and public facilities during the day on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 12 and 13. On Wednesday at noon they will present their findings and recommendations at a community lunch at the Vendome Events Center.

James Grunke, Executive Director of Washington County Economic Development Commission, who applied for the review, said the objective of the community review is to 'increase the vitality and wealth of a community. Community vitality means not only jobs and income, but resiliency and the capacity to respond to both negative and positive change.'

Community wealth, Grunke said, refers to the community's assets, including all types of infrastructure, crime rates, climate, scenery, environmental quality, individual skills, and community spirit.

The visiting team will observe the Weiser community based on a wide range of indicators and a few focus areas identified by the community: local economic development, community involvement and civic life, and land use planning. The team will engage local leaders and citizens in an open dialogue about Weiser's future. The team will use its experience with community development to offer suggestions and strategies to increase the community's health, wealth, and vitality.

Association of Idaho Cities' Shaw said a video of the community debriefing will be available soon after the review is completed and a 50-60 page written report offering strategic recommendations and citing specific referrals will be available in a matter of months.

# Weiser Community Review Agenda

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## **City of Weiser: *Taking a Good Look at Our Community***

*Tuesday, March 12, 2002*

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Community Review Overview

The introductory meeting will be held at the Vendome Community Center, 309 State Street, located on the Corner of State Street and Commercial Street.

9:00 – 9:05 a.m. Welcome and Greetings – Mayor Don Stephens

Why Weiser is excited about this opportunity.

What the City of Weiser hopes to gain from the review.

9:05 – 9:15 a.m. History of Weiser – Betty Derig

9:15- 9:20 a.m. What is a Community Review – Bob Ford, Idaho Department of Commerce

Concept, History, Purpose, Potential Outcomes

9:20 – 9:35 a.m. Introduction of Visiting Team Members – Brian Dale, HUD

9:35 – 9:50 a.m. Tour Overviews by Home Team Leaders and Home Team Introductions

Local Economic Development – Diana Thomas

Land Use Planning – Amy McKnight

Community Life and Civic Involvement – Layna Hafer

9:50 – 9:55 a.m. Logistical Information – James Grunke

Transportation, meals, lodging, etc.

9:55 – 10:00 a.m. Community Review Instructions – Michael Shaw, Association of Idaho Cities

10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Community Tours

### *Community Tour Groups*

#### **Community and Civic Life**

10:00 a.m. Fiddle Contest/Hall of Fame Overview – Layna Hafer

10:15 a.m. Weiser Architectural Committee and Tour of Facilities

Weiser Depot, Pythian Castle, Historic Weiser Walking Tours

11:00 a.m. Memorial Park/Playground Project/Swimming Pool

11:45 a.m. Lunch at Senior Center

- 1:00 p.m. Golf Course
- 1:15 p.m. Museum & Intermountain Institute Buildings
- 2:00 p.m. Weiser High School – Meet with Students and Teachers
- 3:30 p.m. Tour Neighborhoods

(\*\* Interview Hispanic Community after Dinner)

### **Land Use Planning**

- 10:00 a.m. City Planning and Zoning Issues and Maps
- 10:45 a.m. Driving Tour
  - Annex Entryway, Sale-yard and orientation to the river, Mortimors Island, Hwy 95 Entryway, Commercial/Industrial Zoned Property along Weiser River
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch/Interviews with Civic Groups – Vendome Community Center
- 1:15 p.m. North Entryway Tour
  - Western Timber, Appleton Produce, Golf Course, Hwy 95 Property, Rolling Hills Subdivision, Valley View Subdivision, Neighborhoods, Senior Housing
- 2:30 p.m. View of Weiser, Developer’s Perspective
- 3:00 p.m. Hwy 95 Corridor through Town, Walking tour and interviews of businesses.
- 4:00 p.m. Walking tour of Downtown Area

### **Local Economic Development**

- 10:00 a.m. Water Treatment Plant Expansion – Rod Millbrook
- 10:45 a.m. Weiser Industrial Park
  - Idaho Timber, Redmond Homes
- 11:45 a.m. Hwy 95 Frontage
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch/Interviews/Briefing – Weiser Hospital
- 1:30 p.m. Appleton Produce – Robert Wood
- 2:45 p.m. Labor Camp/Sewer Plant
- 3:30 p.m. Downtown Revitalization – Walking tour and interviews of businesses
- 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. “Down-Time”

Members of the Visiting Team may continue to explore Weiser, interview citizens, engage in discussions with community leaders, or rest and prepare for the evening activities.

5:30 – 8:00 p.m.: Networking Dinner

Members of the Visiting Team and Members of the Home team, along with local elected officials and invited guests will gather at the Vendome Community Center for dinner. At 6:30 p.m. Mayor

Stephens will lead a discussion of community concerns including retail trade sector, development along Hwy 95, Downtown development strategies, and other topics of concern. The three teams will also be split up into small groups for a discussion on specific issues.

*Wednesday, March 13, 2002*

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Work Session

The members of the visiting team will have three and a half to four hours to compile the information obtained on March 12<sup>th</sup> during the community tours, meeting with community leaders and public input. Some of the information should include observations, formulated recommendations, and a list of potential resources/fiscal options available to the City of Weiser. The work sessions will take place in the Vendome Community Center.

12:00 p.m. – 2:30 Lunch and Community Debriefing

Michael Shaw and the visiting team leaders will lead the debriefing and give a general report on the visiting team observations and community input. Group leaders will deliver team recommendations, aided by their group members. The visiting team will furnish its preliminary report and field questions. The lunch and debriefing will be held at the Vendome Community Center.