

Idaho Falls Redevelopment Agency
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TO: Idaho Falls Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Wade Sanner
SUBJECT: Stanley-Boge Urban renewal Plan and Consistency with the Imagine IF Comprehensive Plan
DATE: July 26, 2023

Introduction and Legal requirement

In response to national trends and federal programs dealing with deteriorating urban areas, Idaho passed the Idaho Urban Renewal Law of 1965 to give cities and counties tools to deal with challenging areas within their jurisdictions. Idaho Code Title 50, Chapters 20 and 29 outlines law and requirements of utilizing these tools. Primarily, the laws allow for the creation of urban renewal areas, which establishes tax-increment financing as a method to reinvest tax revenues into the area in need. The revenues collected over the life of the district, which is limited to 20 years, pays for public infrastructure or other eligible improvements which help incentivize development or redevelopment. Idaho Falls created the Idaho Falls Redevelopment Agency (Agency) to create and manage these urban renewal areas. To date, the Agency has created six districts, two of which have since closed, which have generated millions of dollars in tax-increment revenue and raised land values hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Stanley Boge Project Area will consist of the area bounded by North Boulevard on the west, U. S. 20 and Stanley Street on the north, and Union Pacific Railroad and Anderson Street on the south. The eastern boundary is comprised of the eastern property line of the parcels lying immediately east of Boge Avenue and its extension south to Anderson Street.

Before an area can be considered for a new district, the Agency and City Council must determine the site meetings at least one of the 14 eligibility requirements outlined in the state code. An eligibility report prepared by Renee Magee and approved by both the Agency Board and the City Council determined the area meets 8 of the 14 criteria outlined in Idaho Code 50-2018(8) and (9) and 50-2903(8). Since then, Ms. Magee has prepared a financial feasibility study and the legal team at Elam and Burke has prepared an urban renewal plan, both of which are required to establish a new district. The Agency Board approved the plan and feasibility study as an attachment at its February 16, 2023 meeting. Both documents are included in this packet.

Before the plan can proceed to the City Council for final approval, Idaho Code 50-2008(b) requires the Planning and Zoning Commission to review it and determine its conformity with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Prior to its approval of an urban renewal project, the local governing body shall submit such plan to the planning commission of the municipality, if any, for review and recommendations as to its conformity with the general plan for the development of the municipality as a whole.

The purpose of this staff report is to illustrate how the proposed plan is consistent with the principles found in *Imagine IF: A Plan to Move Idaho Falls Forward Together*.

Land Use Map

The future land use map in *Imagine IF* (pg. 73) shows the area under consideration as Urban Core.

Snapshot: The Urban Core Transect denotes the central area which functions as the City core and areas within or in close proximity to Downtown and South Downtown. The Urban Core also includes legacy residential subdivisions platted in a traditional grid pattern. These subdivisions tend to be characterized by taller structures, mixed-use buildings, pedestrian-oriented movement of people, commercial and entertainment enterprises. All housing types, civic buildings, town squares and transit stations are typical, but vary between neighborhoods. (*Imagine IF* pg. 68)

The site and proposed development are consistent with this designation in at least three ways. First, it is within one mile of the north boundary of the downtown core. And easily walkable or bikeable via the straight, grid-pattern streets. At the north boundary of downtown is a small market as well as other services. Within the full one-mile radius of the site there are also many other amenities including, Highland Park, Melaleuca Field, Fred Meyer Shopping Center, Freeman Park, University Place, Snake River Riverwalk and a number of other commercial businesses and services. Within the site boundaries is not only the proposed residential development, but also AH Bush Elementary. Although there are accessibility barriers to some of these amenities, the services are nonetheless close by.

The second way that development of this area through urban renewal is highlighted on pages 8-9 of the attached eligibility report. As shown on the aerial photo on page 9, this area was originally intended to connect not only to downtown, but to the neighborhood to the west. Anderson Street connected with Jefferson Avenue, which would have provided direct access to the river and Freeman Park. In other words, this area was even more integrated with more of the “legacy subdivisions” referenced in *Imagine IF* until US Highway 20 was constructed and cut the site off from being developed as originally intended. This, along with the surface level basalt across much of the site has left the site vacant and challenging to develop. Using urban renewal tools allows the site to be developed and place more residents in the vicinity of downtown and other amenities as was originally intended.

The third way the proposal is consistent with the future land use map is the type of development proposed in the urban renewal plan. The Urban Core area is intended to have taller buildings and more dense development. The proposed development for the site is multi-story, higher density

residential, which will connect with the adjacent neighborhood. This style of development is consistent with the Urban Core.

City Wide Comprehensive Plan Policies

Besides being consistent the future land use map, the use of urban renewal in this area is consistent with other policies and goals in the City-wide section of Imagine IF. These are identified below by plan theme in the table on the following pages.

Theme	Issue	Objective	Action	How the Plan Achieves the Action
Community Health	1. Connectivity and Access to Daily Services	A. Focus on Walkable Centers	Action 1: Identify existing and potential walkable centers and focus on promoting a mix of uses where people can live and easily access daily needs.	Although not a central part of an identified walkable center, this area is within 1 mile of the center identified at Holmes and Anderson/Science Center.
			Action 2: Identify and work on barriers to easy walkable and bikeable access to daily needs.	Proposed projects in the plan include construction or improvement of missing or broken sidewalks within the boundary, including along the north side adjacent to Science Center Drive.
		Focus on Becoming a 15-minute City	Action 4: Require new development to connect to adjacent residences or commercial/office areas.	As noted earlier, the development will connect to the adjacent neighborhood by fronting Anderson Street. It will improve overall connectivity by building or repairing sidewalks in the area.
Housing	1. Affordability and Availability	A. Diversity Housing Stock	Action 3: In coordination with the IdaHome Committee, developers, and builders, identify and remove barriers to the construction of	Areas with surface level basalt create financial barriers to construction of housing. Urban renewal is a tool to remove the rock and make the sites developable.

			alternative housing types.	
		B. Expand Capacity to Address Housing Issues	Action 4. Coordinate and partner with CDBG and other grant programs in implementing the CDBG 5-Year Plan's goals for increasing affordable housing availability.	Although this project is not being done in conjunction with CDBG, the main project is being financed through the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Program. The credits were awarded contingent upon successful approval of the urban renewal district, as evidence of community partnership in bringing affordable units to market.
		C. Focus on Infill	Action 2. Consider incentive programs to promote development where infrastructure already exists.	The plan area is surrounded by existing streets and utilities. The site is classic infill as development has already occurred around it and no new roads are required to service it.
			Action 3. For infill and redevelopment, require connection or appropriate integration with existing development such as pathways or roads.	As already noted, projects in the plan include new or repaired sidewalks in the area, including along Science Center Drive.
Economic Development	2. Investing in Older and Deteriorating Areas	A. Develop Appropriate and Varied Tools for Addressing Redevelopment and Infill	Action 1. Continue to collaborate and partner with the Idaho Falls Redevelopment Agency to identify and promote redevelopment opportunities in older parts of the City.	These actions are combined because they are both accomplished directly through the proposed urban renewal plan. Tax-increment financing districts cannot be created without an urban renewal agency. As noted about, the financing will allow the removal of basalt and make the site

			Action 2. Promote Tax-Increment Financing as a primary tool for redevelopment.	developable. Without this tool, the site would continue to sit vacant.
			Action 4: Encourage development in areas already served by public utilities and/or where extensions of facilities are least costly, by exploring infill incentive programs.	See response under Housing, issue 1, objective C, Action 2.
Community Design	1. Appropriate Infill and Redevelopment	A. Ensure Infill Development is Compatible with Existing Uses and Character	Action 4: Find ways to better accommodate and implement redevelopment and infill by working with developers to help create projects that service the needs of the immediate area.	Urban renewal projects must serve the needs of the immediate area. The taxes collected can only be invested in the boundaries of the district and in projects that serve the public good. In this district, the funds will make the sites developable and improve the infrastructure in the area.

Area 4 Actions and Policies

Imagine IF divides Idaho Falls into 5 geographies or neighborhoods. The proposed district is in Area 4, which includes downtown, south downtown, the subject area, and development on the north end of town. Like the City-wide policies and actions, each area has its own goals and objectives specific to the area’s needs. As above, relevant actions which the proposed urban renewal plan helps fulfill are listed in the table below and organized by theme. Although there were fewer specifics the plan meets for Area 4, there are still important connections and accomplishments.

Theme	Issue	Objective	Action	How the Plan Achieves the Action
Community Health	1. Connectivity and Access to Daily services	A. Improve Connectivity	Action 1: Connect areas around Science Center Drive and	Although not a full connection, as noted above, the plan’s project includes sidewalk improvements on

			Fremont Avenue to Freeman Park to bring more people to the park.	Science Center Drive along the northern boundary of the district.
			Action 3: Invest in neighborhoods in ways such as improving walking paths, adding benches, neighborhood groups to lead events, upkeep and beautification projects.	Here again, the plan anticipates improving public infrastructure in the boundary including sidewalk improvements. As the district matures, if there are sufficient funds, they may be used for other public improvements and projects to improve the area.

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, the Agency believes the proposed Stanley Boge Urban Renewal District and associated plan are consistent and with the Imagine IF Comprehensive Plan. The proposed boundary and projects conform to the objectives and actions listed both in the City-wide and Area 4 sections of the plan as outlined in the tables. The Agency respectfully recommends approval of the resolution finding the proposed urban renewal plan in conformity with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.