



# CITY OF IDAHO FALLS: DOWNTOWN DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Focus Group Summary Report



This report was compiled by Agnew::Beck for the City of Idaho Falls. Report maps were developed and designed by Agnew::Beck. Other graphics in this report were developed by Agnew::Beck. Other photos from the City of Idaho Falls 2015



# :: CONTENTS

- 3 INTRODUCTION
- 4 FOCUS GROUP APPROACH
- 5 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS
- 8 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS
- 11 PARCEL SPECIFIC IDEAS
- 12 APPENDICES

# INTRODUCTION

## IDAHO FALLS DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

The City of Idaho Falls has become a vibrant and active regional hub for Southeastern Idaho. Downtown Idaho Falls is a community asset that is centrally located and provides residents and visitors, an opportunity to shop, dine, work, and recreate. In an effort to grow and augment the downtown area to meet the changing needs and desires of the community, the City has begun a robust stakeholder engagement process to inform the future direction of investment into downtown.

The purchase of two prominent lots in the downtown core by the Redevelopment Agency of Idaho Falls was a catalyst for this public engagement process. The two lots, the Bonneville and the Kelsch properties, offer a unique opportunity for the City to strategically invest in prime areas that could significantly reshape the feel of the greater downtown. In addition to these land acquisitions, a number of trends have sparked additional interest in revisiting the vision for Idaho Falls' downtown:

- Limited downtown housing options
- A growing population
- Vacant downtown office space
- The desire for increased and more varied economic activity and investment downtown
- A perception of a lack of parking

The information from these focus groups will be used to inform a new vision for downtown Idaho Falls – a vision that responds to the desires of its citizens.

## FOCUS GROUP APPROACH

In order to gain a better understanding of what downtown stakeholders wanted from future development and investment, the City of Idaho Falls, with the assistance of Agnew::Beck Consulting, led a series of four focus group work sessions on November 10 and 11, 2015. Each of these focus groups was intended to gauge the interests of a particular stakeholder group. A total of 39 people participated in the focus groups as shown below:

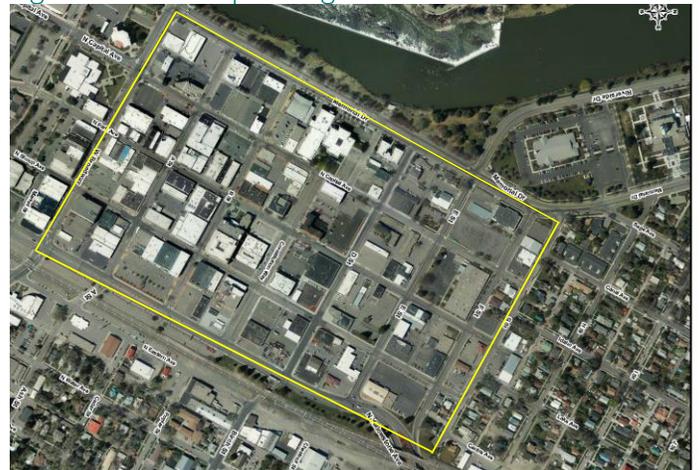
- November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Nonprofits and Cultural Organizations (9 participants)
- November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Downtown Merchants, Property Owners, City Council, and County Commissioners (17 participants)
- November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Architects and Historic Preservation commissioners (8 participants)
- November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Major Employers (5 participants)

Each of these four focus groups provided a unique perspective and helped further the understanding of which opportunities exist in downtown Idaho Falls to improve, expand, and develop an active and vibrant city center. Each focus group was scheduled for a two-hour time period, during which the attendees took part in a live polling exercise, and were asked to discuss and record key themes and issues in small breakout groups.

In addition to the four focus groups, a live polling exercise was conducted with the City of Idaho Falls' Rotary Club. The Rotary Club provided a large quantity of responses from individuals who are heavily invested in the success of Idaho Falls.

Figure 1 shows the current downtown planning area. This area is relatively small in size and encompasses few assets or areas that could be built into a city center. "Focus group participants were asked to redraw the boundaries of downtown in order to inform future planning efforts and investments from the City.

Figure 1: Current planning area



## FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Each focus group included a series of live survey questions about participant preferences and opinions about downtown Idaho Falls. The questions ranged from: “How long have you lived in Idaho Falls?” to “What do you enjoy most about downtown currently?” A full summary of responses to these questions can be found in Appendix C. The audience response questions showed that the participants in the four focus groups were, on average, long-standing community members who were frequent users of the downtown and were generally there to work and/or play (dine, shop, or go to events).

Overall, the focus group participants identified projects and design elements that are consistent with best practices for placemaking. Participants highlighted the importance of streetscape environments, creating opportunities for more people to live downtown, creation of open multi-function plaza spaces, amenities that enhance the downtown experience and allow people stay in downtown longer, the creation of bicycle and pedestrian friendly corridors and connections, as well as the promotion of distinct districts with arts and cultural spaces and installations to build a sense of place and character.

The pages that follow highlight the following:

- Summary of the participant responses to live polling questions
- A composite map showing the results of the discussion exercises
- An overview of the places people loved and locations respondents indicated as areas for improvement
- Summaries of comments specific to the Bonneville and Kelsch properties

# WHAT WE HEARD

## Who are the respondents?

- Respondents are primarily downtown to work (46%) and play (38%)
- Nearly all respondents are downtown several times a week
- Most respondents have lived in Idaho Falls for more than 10 years (82%)

## What downtown needs the most? (first choice)

- 22% of respondents indicate additional housing
- 20% of respondents want more connectivity to the greenbelt
- 17% of respondents want more opportunities to shop

## Parking management

- 31% of respondents want to see the construction of parking garages
- Only 16% of participants think parking is okay as it is

## Housing

- 60% of respondents want mixed use housing downtown (studios over retail space)
- 55% of respondents believe young adults would benefit most from downtown housing

## Streetscape improvements

- The most popular improvement was additional lighting (35%)
- 29% of respondents thought that trees and planters were the most important improvement

## What kind of businesses do respondents want downtown?

- 39% of respondents want mixed use retail (grocery, office and shopping)
- 25% of respondents want additional restaurants

## Visioning for the Future

- 41% of respondents want to see a market/plaza brought to downtown Idaho Falls
- Other projects people wanted to see were: splash pads, outdoor performance spaces, and a pedestrian bridge over the river

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

For the majority of the focus groups, participants were asked to gather in small groups for “progressive conversations” about downtown. Each group of four or five people worked to answer three questions, then members of the group would change tables to create a new mix of participants for the following two questions, etc. This approach was intended to allow the full group to listen to ideas and converse with most other people in the room and allow ideas to spread broadly among the groups. The goals of these conversations were to:

- Identify and redraw the boundaries for downtown Idaho Falls
- Identify places in downtown that respondents really liked, or thought were working well for the downtown area
- Identify spaces that they thought needed some change or improvement
- Identify what kind of developments or ideas they would like to see brought to the Bonneville and Kelsch properties
- Identify one specific project or feature that respondents would like to see downtown, and identify a location where they thought the implementation of that idea would be successful.

Table 1 shows the proposed areas and districts that the focus groups thought could be added to the planning area. Figure 2 on the following page shows a visual representation of those areas.

Table 1: Proposed downtown districts and additions

Area proposed	Number of times drawn
SoDo (South downtown)	8
Yellowstone Ave.	7
River Banks	7
The Westbank	6
Historic downtown	5
Temple district	3
Ridge Avenue District	2
Riverside	1
Hotel Row	1

Figure 2: Proposed downtown boundaries



## PLACES PEOPLE LIKE/DISLIKE

<b>Love</b>	<b>Greenbelt/ Riverwalk</b> Museum of Idaho Willard Arts Center The Snake River Park Ave . Latter Day Saints Temple Library
<b>Like</b>	Art Museum Japanese Gardens ARTitorium Downtown restaurants Sportsmans Park Farmers Market Melaluka Field Civitan Park
<b>Mixed Feelings</b>	Government buildings Constitution Ave. Rock Gardens A Street Eagle Roundabout
<b>Not Working</b>	Post Office Water and Eastern Footbridge Downtown signage Downtown parking Amphitheatre
<b>Don't Like</b>	Children's Museum Visitors Center Lettered streets Yellowstone Ave. <b>Bonneville Hotel</b> <b>Old Savings Center lot</b>

# PARCEL SPECIFIC PROJECT IDEAS

## Bonneville project ideas

Most of the group discussions around the Bonneville parcel identified it as an area of great opportunity. The building was once a prominent destination, and the focus groups indicate that people would love for it to be restored or redeveloped as a core attraction once again. Some of the major takeaways and desires for the lot were:

- A ground floor restaurant to capture the nostalgia of the old Chinese restaurant
- Mixed use development that includes offices, retail, and housing
- Restoration of the building to a historic hotel
- Diverse urban housing that includes affordable, mid-range, and high-end units



## Kelsch (Saving Center) project ideas

One of the primary takeaways from the focus group discussions regarding the Kelsch property was that the parcel is located at an entryway into the downtown, which highlights the importance of having an anchor institution and/or major feature to draw people to this location. Some of the ideas that were discussed for the lot were:

- Mixed use development including a grocery store, offices, apartments and retail facilities
- A visitors center and entrée into downtown
- A rooftop restaurant with a green terrace
- Small plaza or parklet space built into the proposed development

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY NOTES BY FOCUS GROUP

APPENDIX B: ATTENDEES AND SIGN-IN SHEETS

APPENDIX C: AUDIENCE RESPONSE POLLING DATA

APPENDIX D: ANNOTATED MAP PHOTOS

# Appendix A: Summary Notes by Focus Group

## Focus Group I

### Table 1:

#### ***Question 2: Likes***

River

Museum

Willard art center

Artitorium

LDS temple

Riverwalk/greenbelt

Melaluka Field

Library

Park Ave

Sportsman's park

Rock gardens

Parking behind Chesibros

#### ***Question 3: Areas for improvement***

Industrial restaurants

High end housing

New housing and restoration

Amphitheatre

Re-development along Yellowstone

DO not build a police department!

#### ***Question 4: One specific project***

Affordable downtown transportation – Connect tourists to downtown streetscapes in current historic downtown. This could also include a better spot for the visitor center

#### ***Question 5: Parcel Specific Ideas***

Kelsch Lot: Build a trader joes in a larger mixed use development that includes retail and high end condominiums along with a small parklet

Bonneville: retail on the first floor, Housing (big apartments) high end to mid

***Table 2:***

***Question 2: Likes***

Museum of Idaho

Art museum

Willard arts center

Artitorium

River/greenbelt

Tea garden

Restaurant

LDS temple

Eagle Roundabout

Historic Atmosphere

***Question 3: Areas for improvement***

Savings center/Kelsch- Mixed use (grocery)

Bonneville – Mixed use

MOI expansion

Footbridge

Wayfinding

I15 corridor

Events center

Parking lots on capital, A, and B

Visitors center

***Question 4: One specific project***

Savings center lot redevelopment

Footbridge over the river

***Question 5: Parcel Specific Ideas***

Savings Center should be transitioned into a mixed use development featuring: office, retail, residential, and grocery (Aggressive infill)

Bonneville - no comment

## Focus Group 2

### Table 1:

#### ***Question 2: Likes***

Greenbelt and the falls

Civitan plaza

Museum of Idaho

Colonial theatre

#### ***Question 3: Areas for opportunity***

Bonneville hotel, bring back to former glory

More accessible visitors center

Question 4: project specifics

Give people a reason to go downtown as opposed to the greenbelt

Connectivity to hotels for downtown

More housing options

Project: return Bonneville back to a true hotel, not apartments

Question 5: no responses from this group.

### Table 2:

#### ***Question 2: Likes***

Colonial theatre

Library

Sportsman's park

Farmers market

Civitan Park

River

#### ***Question 3: Areas of opportunity***

Old inkleys

Broadway between park and shoup

Shoup and B

Park and B

Bonneville Hotel

Saving Center vacant space

No reason to cross street and explore downtown

#### ***Question 4: One specific project***

Convert unused office space to residential

Savings center build anything

Bonneville Mixed use housing

Diverse retail after comprehensive market analysis

***Question 5: Parcel specific ideas***

Bonneville: convert to mixed use development with a restaurant on the bottom and housing/ offices in the top floors (specifically mixed income housing)

Kelsch: build an anchor store: Trader Joes

**Table 3:**

Question 1 map explanation

Increase the downtown area to incorporate business and residential potential

***Question 2 Likes:***

Museum of Idaho

Willard arts center

Library

The art museum

Greenbelt

Farmers Market

The Celt

SnakeBite

Copper Rill

Japanese Gardens

***Question 3: Areas for opportunity***

Hotel on the falls

Bonneville

Update to industrial sector

The Rec center

Savings center

Alladin floral

***Question 4: Project specific project***

Attract tourist on foot

Build an Imax theatre and make a cultural district

Close Park Avenue and make it a park

Restaurant row

Art galleries

***Question 5: Parcel specific ideas***

No specifics written down for either lot

**Table 4:**

***Question 2 Likes:***

River walk/greenbelt

Business district

Melaluka field

LDS temple

***Question 3: Areas for opportunity***

Rec Center

More public spaces and outdoor spaces, close off streets

***Question 4 One specific projects:***

Bonneville and downtown housing

***Question 5: Parcel specific ideas***

Bonneville – Housing and redevelopment

Kelsch – Grocery store, or organic market, fresh and easy, corner parking

## Focus Group 3

**Table 1:**

***Question 2: Likes***

Greenbelt

Park avenue/ A street

W Broadway vicinity of Artitorium

Sportsmans park

Museum

West bank greenbelt

***Question 3: Areas for opportunity***

Broadway

Yellowstone

North end (lettered streets)

Perception that this is a tough neighborhood

***Question 4: One specific project***

Bring more of the events on the perimeter to the central core of downtown

Civitan plaza

Use constitution for events space

**Question 5: Parcel specific ideas**

Kelsch: Mixed use development. Used as an identifier/ anchor into the downtown

Bonneville: Keep the hotel as a historic hotel. Renovations to the inside but keep exterior facades.

**Table 2:**

**Question 1: Redraw the downtown boundary**

A) the dashed line represents areas for key growth - north end and mostly rebuilding needed). The solid line represents the active boundary for commerce, culture and recreation. The solid line also extends the current boundary and will encompass mostly restoration

**Question 2: Likes**

Park and A streets: as a hub of activity and historic buildings

South side of Broadway: Intact street of buildings, no empty lots and buildings are intact

Courthouse: a central part of the community

City Hall: major employer and a traditional city gathering place, Fantastic historic space

Bonneville Hotel: a monument to community efforts

Constitution Ave: wide avenue with broad vista, and was a grand entrance to town back when it was active.

**Question 3: Areas of opportunity**

Spaces for pop ups, trees would make it lovely

Aladdin Floral

Possible attraction spaces: children's museum (Aquarium)

D.I. building

Mixed use spaces (grocery, office, and housing )

Possible multistory parking on A and Eastern streets

**Question 4: One specific project**

Broadway and memorial alive – Develop first

Footbridge across river, not at Broadway

Highway to Broadway - Rerouting traffic is needed

Spud alley - develop dual entries for Broadway

Add greenway to G Street and Yellowstone

**Question 5: Parcel specific ideas**

Kelsch: restaurant on top with green terrace for outside, 3-5 stories, mixed use development (grocery, office, retail)

Bonneville: Mixed use residential on floors above (affordable and premium); restaurant for nostalgia; should be restored to maintain the historic value.

## Focus Group 4

### ***Question 2: Likes***

Greenbelt

Farmers market

Park Ave

Museum of Idaho

Willard Arts center

A street

LDS temple

Art Museum

Library

Japanese Gardens

### ***Question 3: Areas of opportunity***

Broadway

Post office, desert industries (D to G from memorial to Yellowstone)

Cliff to Basalt (from Capital to S Yellowstone)

Govt Buildings on Constitution

### ***Question 4: One specific project***

Broadway w reinvented Savings Center area as an anchor.

### ***Question 5: Parcel specific ideas***

Bonneville and Kelch: no comment

# Appendix B: Sign-in Sheets

## Focus Group I

### SIGN-IN SHEET

FOCUS GROUP #1

Downtown Idaho Falls Development and Design- Nonprofits and Cultural Organizations  
November 2015  
Willard Arts Center

NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Krisi Stetson	313-3551	Krisi@downtownidahofalls.com
Mala Fyon	535-0399	mala@downtownidahofalls.com
Brandi Newton	419.8855	bnewton@idahofallsarts.org
David Pennock	201-5256	davidpennock@museumofidaho.org
Brent McClane	612-8187	bmcclane@idahofallsidaho.gov
Michele Griggs	524-7777	mabe@theartmuseum.org
David McKinney	552-5575	dmckinney@rescuemission.org
Greg Crockett	523-4445	gregcrockett@hopkinsrodaw.com
Sharon Parry	523-6339	sdparry@cablone.net

Engage Plan Implement  AGNEW  
::BECK  
441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 202, Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
T (907) 222 5424 F (907) 222 5426

## Focus Group 2

### SIGN-IN SHEET

FOCUS GROUP # 2

Downtown Idaho Falls Development and Design– Downtown Merchants, Property Owners, City Council, and County Commissioners  
November 2015  
Willard Arts Center

NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Janet Barton	208-523-1010 x1004	programs@idahofallschamber.com
Blake Wetzel	208-847-5621	bwetzel@baf.com
BENJAMIN MUENCH	208-529-0352	benjamin.muench@goaerinc.com
Jill Beck	208-360-3804	becjill@usnc.com
JANIS Schaefer	208-608-0970	JANISchaefer@AOL.com
Marilyn Mangels	208-221-5742	marilynmangels@gmail.com
Josh Wise	208-863-5133	joshw@easternidaho.org
David Smith	208-?	dmSmith@IdahoFallsIDHS.org
Barbara Dee Ehardt	403-6686	BEhardt@idahofallsidaho.gov
Lise Fairis	612-8323	LFairis@idahofallsidaho.gov
Michael Allen	208-821-6243	mdalla74@gmail.com

Engage Plan Implement   
441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 202, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Karen Hausing	521-6370	Karen.hausing@datawav.com
Tom Hally	680-8886	hallytom@yaho.com
Tina Dixon	(805) 838-3222	tinadixon1212@yahoo.com
John Radford		
Dann Briggs	612-8777	dbriggs@idahofallsidaho.gov

## Focus Group 3

### SIGN-IN SHEET

Focus Group 3

Downtown Idaho Falls Development and Design– Architects and Historic Preservation Commission  
November 2015  
Willard Arts Center

NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Kurt Kavst	522-4030	Kurt@AKM-ARCH.NET
Roxane Mitro	522-4030	rox@akm-arch.net
Renee Magee	525-8845	reneem@cableone.net
Julie Braun Williams	520-7231	juliebraunwilliams@gmail.com
Aaron Johnson	221-7349	aaron.johnson@kareman-hall.com
KEITH KENNEDY	522-4151	<del>KE</del> ktkarch2@yahoo.com
Rebecca Casper	208-716-8686	rcasper@idahofallsidaho.gov
Graham Whipple	208-221-2012	graham@auffalldesign.com

Engage Plan Implement   
441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 202, Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
T (907) 222 5424 F (907) 222 5426

## Focus Group 4

### SIGN-IN SHEET

FOCUS GROUP # 4

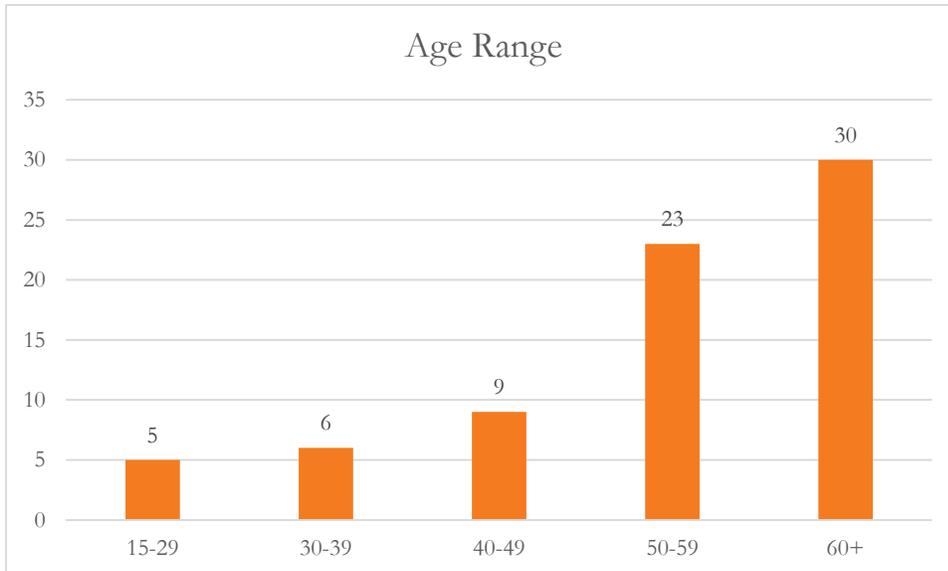
Downtown Idaho Falls Development and Design- Major Employers  
November 2015  
Willard Arts Center

Miranda Marquit		
PARK PLACE	208-681-1278	P.PRICE@PARKPLACEID.FALLS.ID
Margaret Wimborne	(208) 525-7504	wimbmarg@d911.k12.id.us
LORI PRIEST	(208) 526-9154	lori.priest@inf.gov
Kevin DeKald	208-524-4621	kevin@crsa-us.com

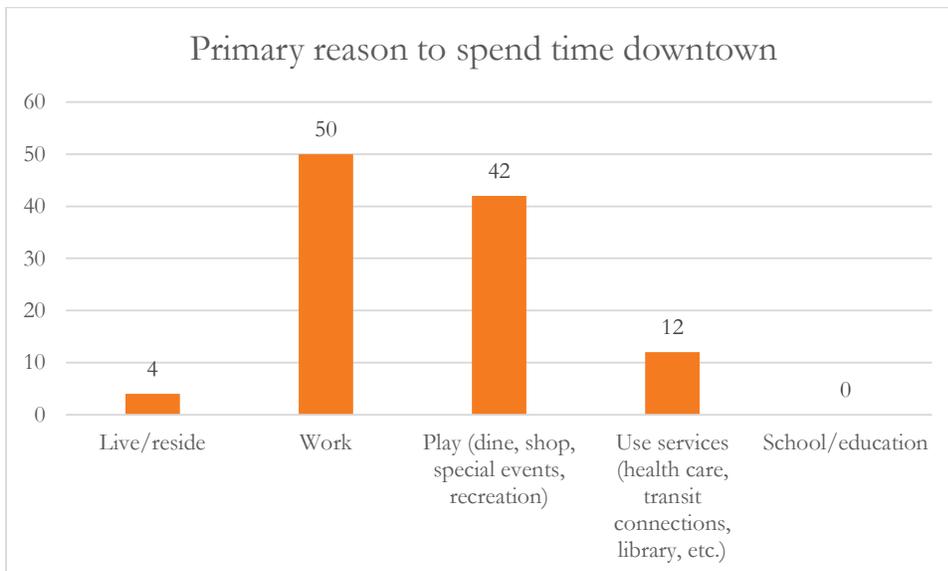
Engage Plan Implement  AGNEW  
441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 202, Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
T (907) 222 5424 F (907) 222 5426

## Appendix C: Audience Response Polling Data

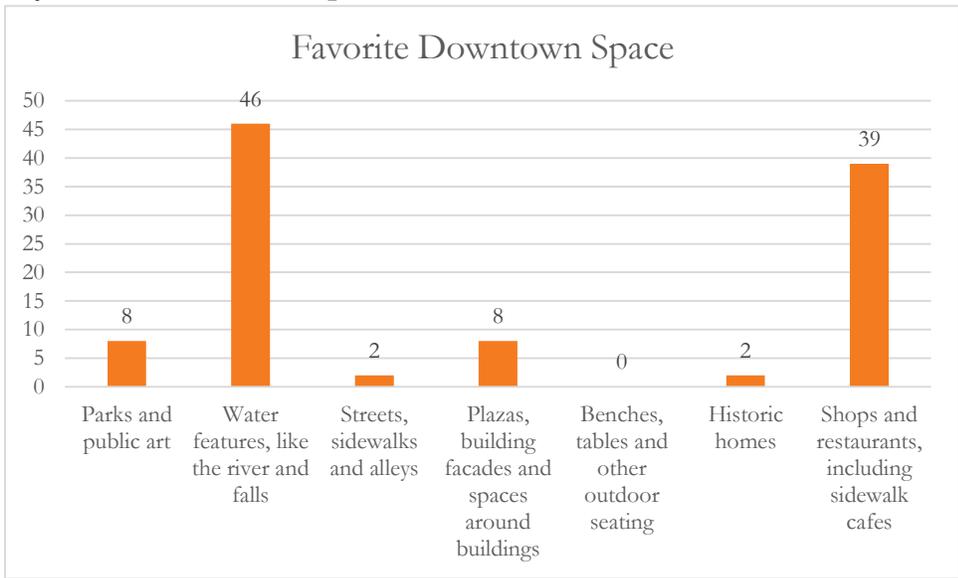
**What age range do you fall within?**



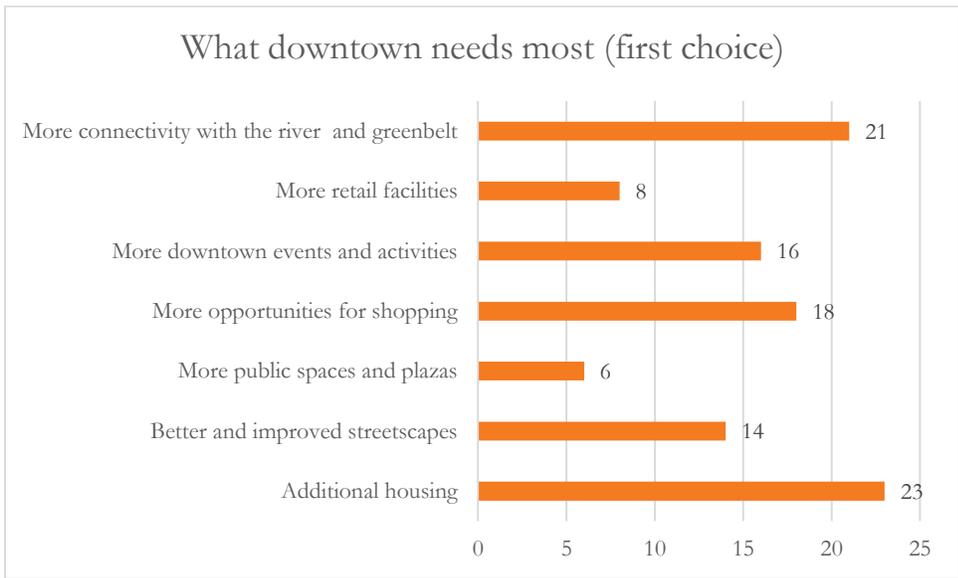
**The primary reason I spend time in downtown Idaho Falls is to:**



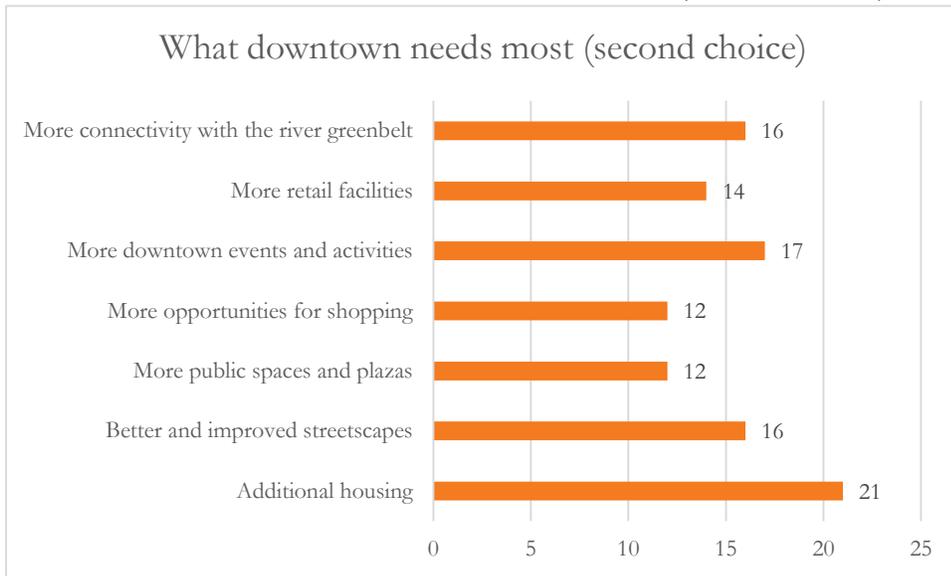
**My favorite downtown space is:**



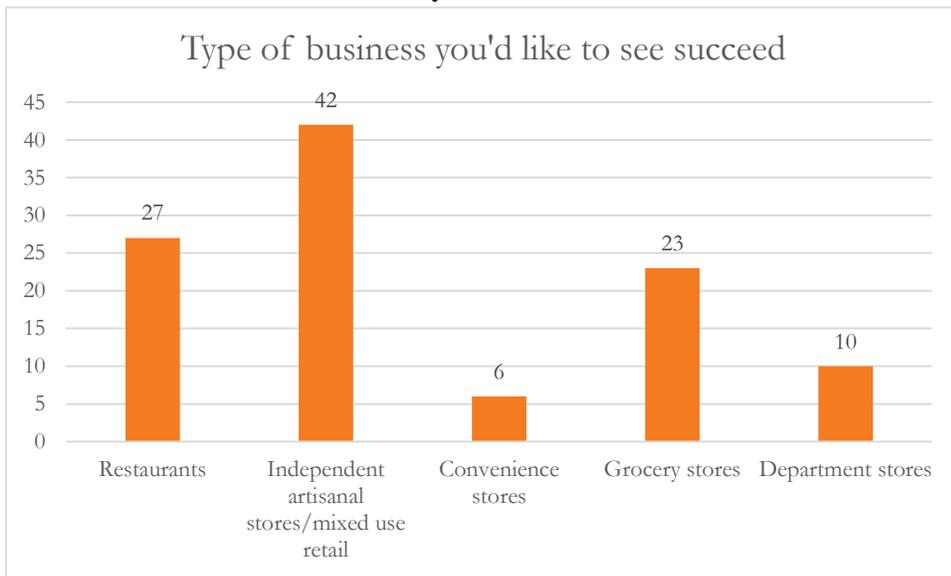
**What does downtown Idaho Falls need the most? (first choice)**



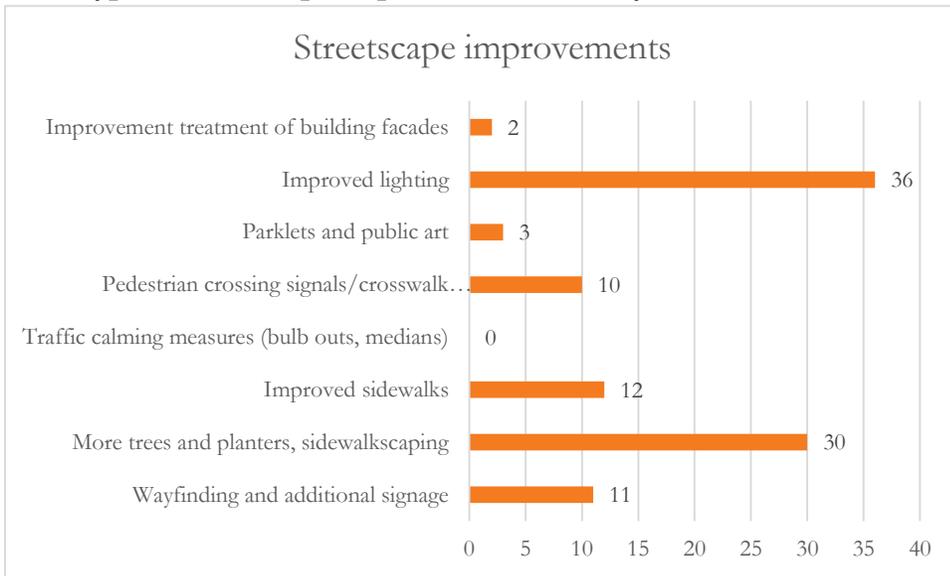
**What does downtown Idaho Falls need the most? (second choice)**



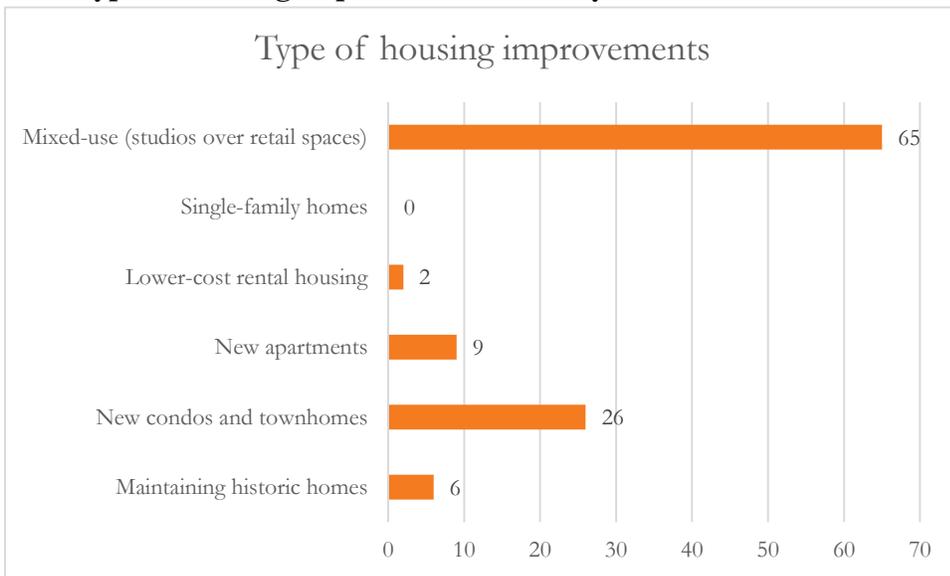
**What kind of businesses would you most like to see succeed in the downtown?**



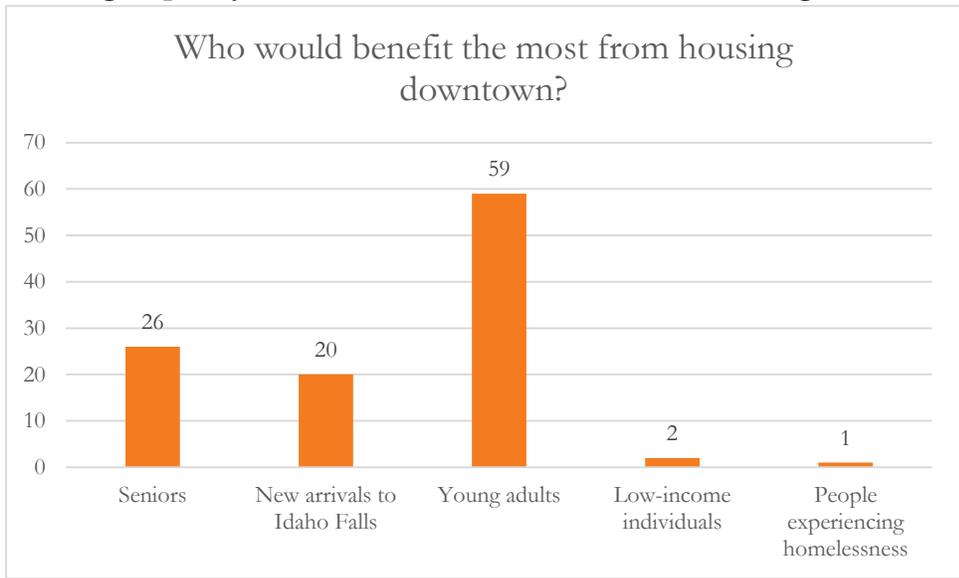
### What type of streetscape improvements would you most like to see downtown?



### What type of housing improvements would you most like to see downtown?



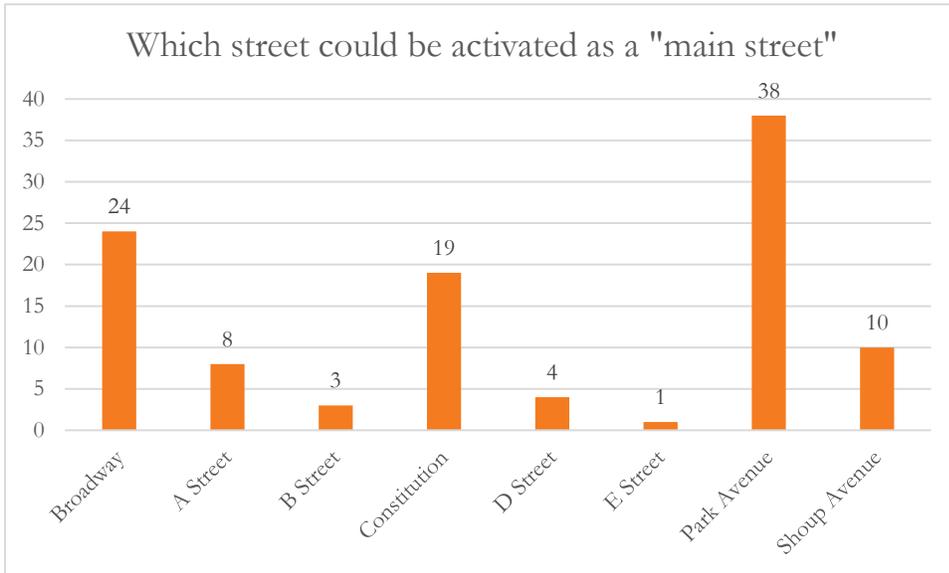
**Which group do you think would benefit most from housing downtown?**



**What parking management strategies would you like to see pursued, if any?**



**If you could see one street redeveloped over time as an active, vibrant “main street” it would be...**



**If I could add one special attraction or feature to downtown Idaho Falls it would be...**

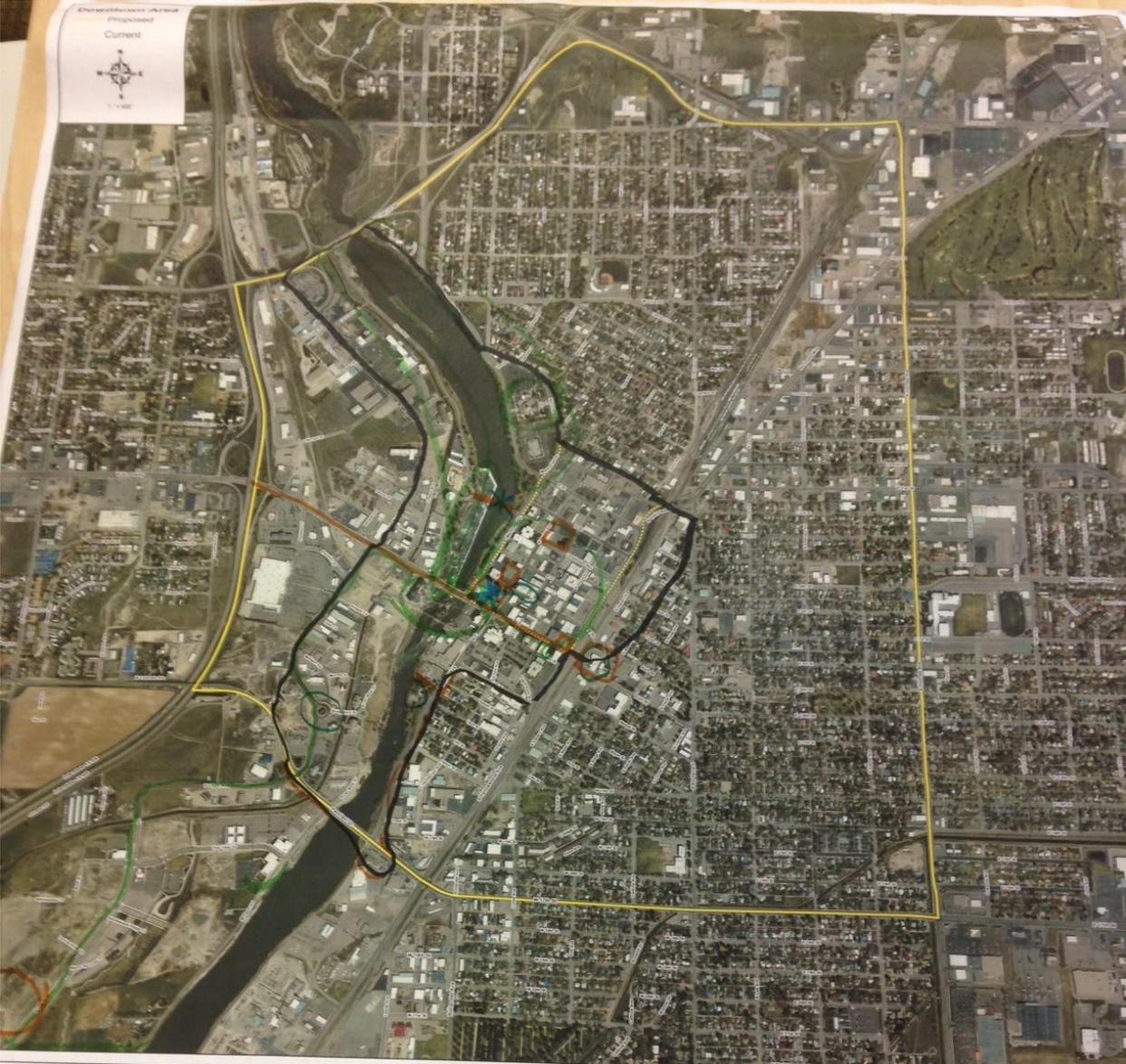


## Appendix D: Focus Group Map Photos

### Focus Group I: Table I



Focus Group 1: Table 2



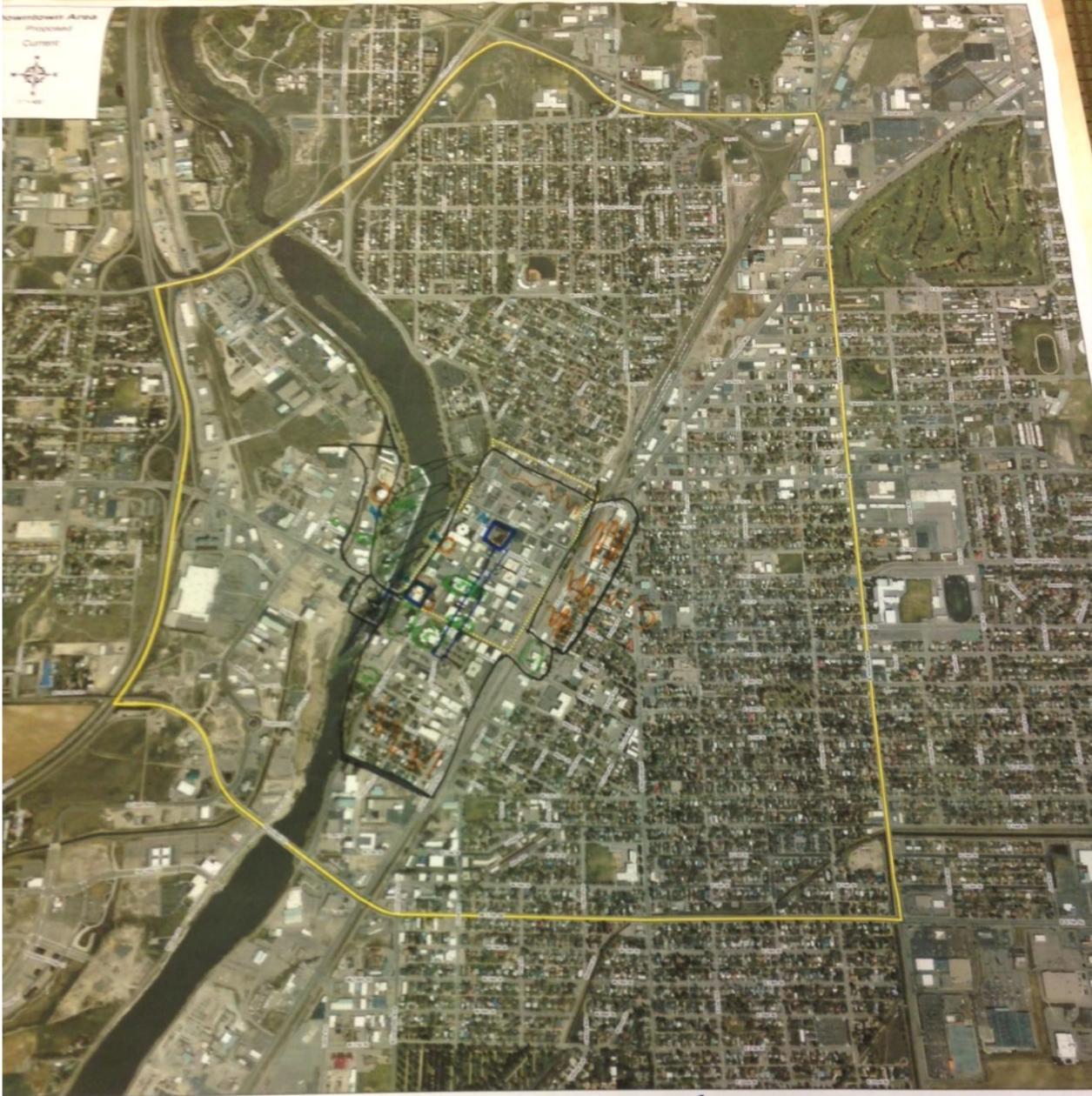
Focus Group 2: Table 1



Focus Group 2: Table 2



Focus Group 2: Table 3



Focus Group 3: Table I



Focus Group 3: Table 2



Focus Group 4: Table I

