City of Meridian
Mayor Tammy de Weerd
Transition Team Final Report
April 14, 2004
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MESSAGE FROM
MAYOR TAMMY DE WEERD

Since I announced my candidacy for Mayor, it has been my goal for Meridian City Hall to be open, inclusive, and diverse. Respective of this approach I am committed to bring to the Office of Mayor, I appointed a Transition Team, a mix of seasoned city leaders and new faces to look at city services and operation.

Meridian is a city of great promise. Together we can assure a city government that responds to the needs of business, citizens and the community as a whole - focusing city services on an exceptional level of customer service. Meridian will be seen as a partner for responsible growth, prosperity and as having a quality of life second to none.

I greatly appreciate the time and dedication of this Transition Team. Their efforts will provide a fresh perspective to city operations, and will ultimately lead to improvements which will help make a terrific city even better.

MESSAGE FROM ERIC CAWLEY
TRANSITION TEAM CHAIRMAN

The 38 members of the Mayor’s Transition Team spent over 800 combined hours interviewing elected officials, city department directors and staff, businesses and homeowners with one mission in mind: to help the City of Meridian meet its true potential.

The report in your hands is by no means a comprehensive overview of all city operations, nor is it expected that all of its recommendations will be enacted. It is, however, hoped by all the members of this Team that its findings will serve as a tool to help usher in a new era of prosperity and collaboration in the City of Meridian.

On behalf of the Meridian Mayor’s Transition Team, it has been an honor and privilege to serve on this Team. We encourage all Meridian residents and other interested parties to share their talents, abilities and knowledge in helping our community grow, develop and prosper.
CITY OF MERIDIAN

MISSION

Meridian is a vibrant and caring community that promotes itself as a premier place to live, work and raise a family.

VISION

The vision adopted by the leaders of our premier city is to promote a safe vibrant community by implementing the principles and policies of the comprehensive plan. The Mayor and Council will provide effective and responsible leadership, positive staff development, maximize available resources, and improve connectivity to our community. As a caring city we are committed to fiscal responsibility, public involvement, strategic partnerships and economic vitality.

VALUES

Customer Service
Accountability
Respect
Excellence
Setting the Tone for Governmental Leadership

On November 4, 2003, Tammy de Weerd was elected Mayor of the City of Meridian. Throughout her campaign, candidate De Weerd ran on the general premise that the city should be run as much like a business as possible for a public body. To this end, she established a number of themes that she indicated would be the drivers of her administration. These themes were formulated around the characteristics of the type of government for which she would aggressively advocate and work.

The first theme was responsive government. She proposed a city government that promoted dialogue from all quarters of the community and responded to the concerns and needs of the entire community.

Second was the theme of effective government. She envisioned a government that allocated budgetary and human resources to accomplish the goals and meet the needs of the citizenry, i.e., a government that does the right things.

Third was pro-active government. She advanced the need for city employees and leaders to exercise initiative, to actively enforce ordinances and to approach matters with a problem solving orientation rather than an orientation of "correctness."

The fourth theme was that of efficient government. She called for the establishment of a city website which would enable city services and information to be made available anytime, providing quality services at the lowest cost to taxpayers and citizens and the introduction of new approaches to government that would streamline the provision of city services, i.e., a government that does things right.

The final theme was forward-looking government. She envisioned a city government that thinks and acts strategically by identifying and approaching issues and advancing efforts that will achieve the established goals along the vision of Meridian as a great place to live, work and raise a family i.e., a government that, to paraphrase retired hockey pro Wayne Gretzky, "goes where the puck's going to be, not where it is."
TRANSITION TEAM TIMELINE

Wednesday, December 3
Overview
Why this Transition Team is important to a new administration
Introduction of Transition Team Leaders
Transition Team Kits – page by page
Transition Team Units
Overall objectives
Who to interview
Questions to ask
<< Break into individual units >>
Meet your Transition Team Unit's fellow members
Develop your game plan
Schedule Unit meeting(s)

Wednesday, December 17
Introduction of New Members
Status Reports from Various Units
Lori Heelan Jones re: City of Meridian Revenue Enhancement Committee Findings
Question and Answers for Mayor-Elect Tammy de Weerd

Wednesday, January 7
Dr. John Lutry re: City of Meridian Strategic Planning process
Mayor-Elect Tammy de Weerd re: challenge areas and the strategic planning process during her administration

Wednesday, January 21
Status Reports
Group Deliberations
Interviews and Special information/data needed in drafting reports

Wednesday, February 4
City Finance Director Stacy Kilchenmann
Discuss Unit Reports formatting

Wednesday, February 18
City Planning Director Zoning Administrator Anna Powell
Review timetable for our transition team between now and April 14th
Discuss final formatting of Unit reports

Wednesday, March 3
Discussion re: City of Meridian Website Recommendations

Wednesday, March 17
Unit Report Summaries distributed to all committee members
Units schedule a meeting with Tammy re: preliminary findings

Wednesday, March 31
Eric presents preliminary overall findings to Transition Team
Units present Final Reports to entire Transition Team

Wednesday, April 14
Final Transition Team Report formally submitted
OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Transition Team has expressed and felt it noteworthy to communicate the overall impression of business leaders, citizens, and regional leaders that as a result of their interviews recognized the high quality of Meridian city employees. The members of the teams also recognized and appreciate the constraint and fiscally conservative nature of Meridian elected leaders. They were impressed that Meridian functions as a relatively smooth lean machine minus the layers of fat often seen in government entities.

GREATER PROACTIVITY IN CITYWIDE OPERATIONS

The City of Meridian must seize every available and potential opportunity to control its own destiny. While it is imperative that the city continue to work with other municipalities and other governmental entities, it must do everything possible to dictate the course of its own future, according to the wishes of the citizens of Meridian and its elected officials.

The city can go far in fulfilling this recommendation as it develops a comprehensive Strategic Economic Development Plan by redefining the priorities of the Meridian Transportation Task Force. The City must create and preserve a sustainable ratio between commercial and residential growth in order to maintain a tax base for adequate municipal services to protect the quality of life of Meridian citizens. Meridian’s ability to continue dictating its own future can be further strengthened as it establishes strong process improvement principles into action.

ENHANCED RELATIONSHIPS

Effective government demands well-established and nurtured relationships, both within the city limits and outside. The most logical catalysts for enhanced relationships begin at the top of city government, with its elected officials. It is exemplified by superior customer service delivered by city employees, through the business, neighborhoods and homes of Meridian residents.

City employees will benefit by greater interaction and recognition from city elected officials and department directors. Businesses will benefit as building, planning and zoning processes are streamlined and speeded up. Meridian residents will benefit as the City Council lends a listening ear to neighborhood and homeowners associations. Meridian residents will also be winners as the city strengthens relationships with other cities, the county and the State of Idaho.

HEIGHTENED UTILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY

One of the best tools to enhance the responsiveness and serviceability of city government is to improve the use of available technology. Although technology cannot solve all problems, it can go far in providing city services day or night, reducing costs and making city government more efficient.

A city website, based on the best municipal websites in America, can not only deliver information about the city, but it can also be a means to attract new business growth and residential home sales. City government transactions could be conducted online, thereby minimizing or negating the need to travel to City Hall. Another example of technology helping government work more efficiently would be the use of cell phones to increase police officer time spent in the field.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

BILLING AND FINANCE DEPARTMENT
1. Explore alternative payment options, affording citizens additional/convenient methods of payment.
2. Evaluate collection methods
3. Examine Auditor’s recommendations
4. Explore utilizing a centralized purchasing agent or system.
5. Regularly report on revenue sources

BUILDING DEPARTMENT
1. Create a Process Improvement Group (PIG) which would provide ongoing, positive and meaningful improvement to the processes and functions of the City of Meridian and, in this case, the Building Department.
2. Speed up the Building Permit Process. Improve building permit issuance time.
3. Increase the quality - and quantity - of employee recognition.

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SERVICES
1. Reorganize the city’s Information Technology Unit into a stand-alone city Department
2. Provide external feedback and involvement into city IT operations
3. As a city, collaboratively design, deploy and continuously improve the most dynamic city website in the United States.
4. Enhance city communications
5. Foster an environment of continuous improvement

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOBS
1. Enhance Planning and Zoning’s role in economic development
2. Establish a business inventory. The city needs to consider creating a business registration process.
3. Track business inquiries, identify needs, evaluate success/failure and recommend improvements.
4. Promote state-wide and local initiatives to increase exposure of local businesses to markets abroad and large government/sub-contractor purchasing entities. The Idaho Department of Commerce is a resource.
5. Educate local businesses about state incentives, tax credits, low interest financing, training reimbursements.
6. Take full advantage of grants available with the State Tourism Development Division.
7. Communicate the resources, expertise and business support programs offered by the Department of Commerce and Labor to local businesses as part of a comprehensive retention and expansion program.
8. Develop a long-range plan to include tourism.
10. Create a business-friendly climate and enhance the City’s ability to compete for expanding or relocating businesses.
11. Enhance Local business outreach by City Leaders and Department Heads.
12. Ensure optimal infrastructure of sufficient capacity for business parks.
13. Strengthen the City’s relationship and effectiveness with Regional, State and Federal Agencies.
14. Create and preserve a sustainable ratio between commercial and residential growth in order to maintain a tax base for adequate municipal services, protecting the quality of life of Meridian citizens.
15. Ensure effective business attraction.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

FIRE DEPARTMENT
1. Enhance staffing levels.
2. Improve response time.
3. Explore greater regional cooperation.
4. Provide excellent training.
5. Provide more information via the city website.
6. Expand Public Education Programs.
7. Heighten Fire Department Reporting.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
1. Implement an employee recognition and merit pay policy.
2. Establish goals for employee morale, development, and communication.
3. Establish uniform orientation and training processes.
4. Make the vacation/leave policy congruent with city standards of equal earning and usage rates across all departments.
5. Employ the services of an outside consulting firm for an in-depth evaluation and needs-based review.
7. Develop a standardized bid review process.
8. Empower the employees to be active participants in the community.

MAYOR, CITY CLERK AND CITY COUNCIL
1. Identify and communicate with Meridian’s homeowner associations.
2. Utilize representatives of the homeowner organizations in regional areas for feedback on regional issues and concerns.
3. Actively support and encourage the development of neighborhood associations throughout the city.
4. Encourage greater participation on city Boards and Commissions.
5. Fully utilize the city’s website to enhance citizen participation on boards and commissions.
6. Increase the number of polling locations for city elections.
7. Utilize temporary signage near polling locations for better visibility and reminder of election.
8. Enhance the city’s website to show polling places, provide information on how to register and obtain an absentee ballot.
9. Continue cross training of staff and adding additional staff when warranted to allow the city to adequately serve a growing public.
10. Review breakout of responsibilities in the City Clerk’s office related to planning and zoning issues.

PARKS, RECREATION AND YOUTH
1. Aggressively develop park land to increase the average for the city.
2. Form a Mayor’s Youth Council.
3. Establish a thorough, informative Parks and Recreation website.
4. Write and establish clear, concise objectives and job descriptions for all Meridian Parks and Recreation Employees.
5. Sponsor up to four (4) youth representatives to attend the upcoming Association of Idaho Cities convention to be held in Garden City Red Lion in June of 2004.
6. Communicate Meridian’s vision of a family based community with entities which associate with the city.
7. Establish and enhance dialogues and partnerships with the Meridian School District.

PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT
1. Create a Process Review Committee.
2. Update and improve the Zoning Ordinance.
3. Improve the effectiveness, working relationship and trust among planning staff and City Council toward the Planning and Zoning Commission and its members, and visa versa.
4. Speed up the Process.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. Continue to monitor city growth and plan for additional patrol officer positions to reach acceptable staffing levels. Optimally, the benchmark should be the national average from the 2000 LEMAS Survey of 2.6 full-time officers per 1,000 residents. Alternatively, the city may want to begin by using the benchmark for cities with populations between 25,000 and 49,999, which is 1.8 officers per 1,000 residents.
2. Develop a customer-service and community policing plan promoting the mission and values of the department.
3. Expand the use of citizen volunteers at the Meridian Police Department. The hiring of a volunteer coordinator would facilitate this effort.
4. All patrol officers should have cell-phones.
5. Explore the utility of crime reporting through the Meridian Police Department website or some other non-traditional means, especially for the more prevalent crimes reported in the City: theft, vandalism, and burglary. Partner with fire services to facilitate report writing when traditional methods of taking reports are used.
6. Make use of the Department’s website and crime prevention specialist position for needed crime prevention information.
7. Continue a system of internal awards and recognition, but change the procedure for recognizing these achievements.
8. Identify important outcome measures that should be used in evaluating a police officer performance—one that captures both traditional policing activities and more contemporary notions of community policing and problem solving.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

1. Heighten participation in community boards and commissions.
2. Centralize and enhance public involvement efforts.
3. Heighten outreach to community groups.
4. Ensure public involvement opportunities are well-publicized.
5. Continue working in a partnership with the media.
6. Heighten participation on regional boards and commissions, and other organizations which could further the city’s mission.

PUBLIC WORKS

1. Employee job descriptions and organizational flow charts for the Public Works Department should be re-examined, clarified and updated.
2. Additional management training should be provided to each member of the Public Works Department who has management responsibilities.
3. A process improvement group should be formed for the purpose of on-going review with an eye toward further improvement of procedures and processes of the Public Works Department.
4. Identify growth priorities within the city master plan to assist the Public Works Department in setting its direction and its priorities.
5. Enhance the Public Works Department’s portion of the city’s website to allow increased access to public works information and services via the Internet.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Meridian should control its own transportation-related destiny.
2. Re-purpose the Meridian Transportation Task Force.
3. Hire a City of Meridian Transportation Planner.
5. Change Meridian Planning and Zoning ordinances to promote smart growth and enable alternate transportation.
6. Give clean industries incentives to locate in Meridian.
7. Purchase City vehicles that use "clean air fuels."
9. Maximize Meridian’s water quantity.
10. Develop and execute a long-range solid waste action plan.
11. Ensure quality utility service exists in the City of Meridian.
TRANSITION TEAM UNIT REPORT: BILLING AND FINANCE DEPARTMENT

I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine the city’s current billing system. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the current billing system and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Evaluate the city’s current finance methods and policies.
- Recommend ways in which the city’s billing and finance systems can integrate with the city’s website.
- Recommend performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress.

Issues Assessment

Currently the Finance/Billing Department bills 18,000 households monthly. With Meridian’s anticipated growth rate (projected at 6% in 2004), increasing demand will be placed on this Department. With this volume and anticipated growth, it is imperative that the city’s billing system and finance methods are positioned to move forward to handle the demand while providing quality customer service to citizens and maintaining financial integrity.

City Governance

Vision: Meridian will continue to grow creating additional demand for more and better financial information, financial planning, and analysis. Increased accounting and reporting capability will be required of all departments, as will timely, proactive and accurate reports, better historic accounting and more specific detailed analysis for public and city officials. New complex challenges will be met through sound accounting procedures and systems utilizing modern computing capability and analysis tools, and offering financial training to all departments to promote higher quality record keeping, better collaboration and adherence to proper financial standards.

Mission: The department is the general business management arm of city government, providing specific financial and accounting services for elected officials, Department Directors, and the citizens of Meridian. Basic services include annual budgeting, financial analysis and reporting, monitoring state/city rules and regulations, and maintenance of reliable internal controls over financial and accounting systems, purchasing, and capital assets.

Staff size: The Finance Department is currently staffed with 10 Employees, led by the city’s Finance Director.

Annual budget: The annual budget appears to be adequate under current circumstances, however the city’s projected growth will certainly increase the need for additional funding.

Major challenges:

Maintain efficiencies and level of service in times of rapid population growth. The department may need to pursue alternative billing methods/processes (i.e. moving towards electronic billing via internet billing and payment options).
Coordinate capital plans among the various departments to ensure economies of scale and savings in capital expenditures.

Search for new revenue sources, such as fee-based services, impact fees and grants.

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: Billing Systems
Billing systems/programs afforded by other cities. The billing system can be addressed by examining systems/programs utilized by other cities. Example: Salt Lake and other cities offer residents the opportunity to view/pay bills on-line.

Customer requests: Residents have requested electronic payment capability.

Benchmark 2: Finance Policies
Passing external audit reviews. A benchmark for the Finance Department is a “clean” audit opinion each year from outside auditors.

Strategic Plan. A strategic plan was drafted by the Finance Department in 2001. This plan identified challenges and goals and has been utilized as a tool to improve processes and to plan for the future.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

The Finance and Billing Department is to be commended for its accomplishments and services it provides and manages. Finance and Billing has held itself accountable to the strategic goals set forth in the plan drafted by and for its department. Recommendations from past audits and studies have indeed been implemented and show positive results. The Department has worked hard to streamline, improve customer service and to ensure sound internal controls over financial and accounting systems, purchasing and capital assets.

Benchmark 1: Billing Systems
The City’s Finance/Billing Department has diligently pursued avenues to enhance customer service and efficiencies. It recently introduced the option to pay water/sewer/trash by direct pay or automatic withdrawal. Additionally, to enhance the productivity and efficiency the department has implemented bar coding on bills and is utilizing a third party to print, stuff and mail.

Benchmark 2: Finance Policies
The annual “clean” audit opinion speaks well of the staff’s current ability to implement accounting controls. Based on the most recent external audit, city personnel have been quick to respond to any weakness identified and have worked to improve policies and systems. For example, to address segregation of duties as a whole, new job descriptions were written and job functions/tasks re-aligned.

Interviews and review of the annual Variance Report demonstrated that the Billing/Department has made great strides in reaching for and accomplishing its strategic initiatives.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
Explore alternative payment options, affording citizens additional/convenient methods of payment.

The Finance Department is to be commended for its recent offering of direct pay. It is recommended that it also review other payment options, such as:

- On-line payment via the city’s website. Many cities currently offer citizens the opportunity to pay and/or review their bills on-line. As the Mayor and City Council evaluate this proposal, they would need to be determined if this payment method is cost-effective for the city.
- Offering bill payment via credit/debit card payment.

**Recommendation 2**
Evaluate collection methods

The department has improved payment and collection processes by implementation of bar coding, and by outsourcing some of the billing functions. In addition to these improvements, it is recommended the department investigate other time and money-saving measures, such as a lock box service.

**Recommendation 3**
Examine Auditor’s recommendations

The Mayor and City Council should annually examine the auditor’s written recommendations after each audit. The ongoing goal to annually meet the auditor’s recommendations should be reviewed each year. The council may wish to examine the possibility of an internal audit function that reports directly to the Council.

**Recommendation 4**
Explore utilizing a centralized purchasing agent or system.

It is recommended that as part of the budget process, a centralized purchasing agent or system is appointed to coordinate approved acquisitions. This could enable the city to buy on a more cost effective basis. In other words, rather than have each department purchase individually, combine similar orders to attract more competitive bids from vendors. As part of the budget approval process, the departments could coordinate their capital acquisitions. Approved purchases grouped together could be presented for public bid.

**Recommendation 5**
Regularly report on revenue sources

To help the city meet its budget requirements in an environment where the gap between costs and revenue is narrowing each year, we recommend asking each department director to review and report on current and potential service-based revenue sources their department does or could generate.

**Recommendation 6**
Explore bi-monthly billing cycles.

Several citizens have requested the city move from monthly to bi-monthly billing cycle. This move could save the city money in postage and service fees, and could improve efficiency. Many surrounding cities already bill bi-monthly.
TRANSITION TEAM UNIT REPORT: BUILDING DEPARTMENT

I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine the city’s building approval system, comparing it with systems of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Interview Meridian residents, business owners, developers, neighborhood associations and building professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s building approval efforts with those of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Note strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Investigate ways in which the city’s building approval process can be streamlined. Recommend ways in which feedback can be obtained by those applying for any building action on an ongoing basis.
- Investigate and recommend ways in which the building approval process can be integrated with the City of Meridian website to enhance customer service.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements which will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

Issues Assessment

The Building Department provides an important function for the City of Meridian. Its role often goes largely unnoticed unless the Building Department is not functioning well. A Building Department can play a vital role the success of a city and can also be a detriment if not responsive to the needs of the community. All builders, architects and developers know which city building departments are good to work with and which building departments are difficult. The City of Meridian Building Department is known as a good building department.

As with all of the Departments in the City of Meridian, the biggest challenge of the Building Department is growth. If the Building Department cannot respond to the demands placed on it by the dramatic growth, the building activity will be choked and will migrate to neighboring communities. The City of Meridian and the Building Department must establish and develop an attitude that encourages and welcomes growth and the accompanying challenges.

The Building Department by most accounts is functioning very well. Permits are issued within acceptable time periods and the Staff is well liked. According to the builders we interviewed, the building inspectors are responsive and will work to accommodate a builder’s schedule. Daunt Whitman, the head of the Building Department, is respected by the building community and works to accommodate their needs.

The Meridian City Building Department is unique in that other than the two clerks in the office, all other functions are subcontracted out. Daunt Whitman is the Building Official. Electrical, mechanical and plumbing inspection services are contracted as well. None of the building inspectors are city employees and therefore are not subject to the same policies and procedures that govern employees of the City of Meridian.

The fact that the Building Department services are contracted to private entities is not unusual and in fact is a common practice for a small city or town. Typically once a city reaches a certain size, the private service contractor is replaced in favor of a department consisting of employees of the city. However, in most instances, the private sector can
provide better service at a lower cost than the public sector. It is recommended that the city continue to use contracted inspectors at this time. It would be unfortunate for the City of Meridian to abandon a system that is working well.

II. BENCHMARKS

The primary unit of measurement for a building department is time: the time it takes to issue a permit, to get a building inspection, or to issue a Certificate of Occupancy. Each builder, architect, developer or homeowner views their particular project as the most important in the city and expects the Building Department plan checkers and inspectors to respond appropriately.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARK)

Benchmark 1: Continuous Improvement
Due to the growth of the City of Meridian and the increasing workloads of the Mayor, City Council and Staff, there is no ongoing, proactive vehicle for improving city processes and functions.

Benchmark 2: Speed up the Building Permit Process
The main measure of a Building Department is the amount of time it takes to issue a building permit. Currently it takes 7–10 days for a residential building permit and 5-6 weeks for a commercial building permit. This processing time is faster than Boise and slower than Nampa. The current time periods are fine if the City of Meridian wants to run in the middle of the pack. However, if the City of Meridian wants to run ahead of the pack, then the processing times are not even close to what can be achieved and have been achieved in other cities.

Benchmark 3: City Employee Recognition
A concern was raised about the lack of recognition, attention and consideration provided to the city employees (two clerks) who do work in the Building Department, particularly given the attitude they exhibit of going the extra mile to provide superior customer service. It was also noted that they receive only hand-me-down office equipment and furniture and deserve better.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
Create a Process Improvement Group (PIG) which would provide ongoing, positive and meaningful improvement to the processes and functions of the City of Meridian and, in this case, the Building Department.

A Process Improvement Group could consist of volunteers from the private sector who work on a regular basis with the City’s Building Department. Builders, general contractors, architects, engineers and developers would form the committee along with Building Department staff and a member of the Mayor’s office or the City Council. The appointed group would select a Chairperson. The size of the group should have no more than 8-10 members who are appointed by the Mayor and City Council to staggered terms. The committee should meet once a month for at least the first six months and then quarterly thereafter. Cost: none, other than the time of the committee members and a room in which to meet.

Recommendation 2
Speed up the Building Permit Process. Improve building permit issuance time.
Interviews with Staff and the public produced the following suggestions. This list is not intended to be comprehensive in nature, but rather a sampling of comments and suggestions received during our interviews.

- Have one or two Building Department personnel in the Building Department office during office hours to process and issue Building Permits.
- Have one or two building department personnel in the Building Department office during office hours to answer telephone, email and walk-in inquiries. Personnel for this function can be the same personnel as for building permit issuance function.
- Simple Tenant Improvement permits for commercial, industrial and retail buildings should be issued over the counter the same day.
- It is essential that the Mayor and City Council recognize that the Building Department is essentially controlled by one person. If that one person is unable to continue the operation of the Building Department due to death, illness or midlife crisis, the Building Department will cease to function effectively. It is imperative that the Mayor and City Council work to provide planning and structure that addresses this critical situation.
- All building permit applications should be treated with the same urgency as a special project such as Citigroup or T-Mobile. Each project is just as urgent to the builder, developers and owners of the individual project.
- The Fire Department is the weak link in the building permit process. Changes must be made to allow for faster reviews and approvals. The Fire Department official responsible for the review of plans appears to have gaps in knowledge of the Fire Code, which slows down the process and requires the too frequent involvement of private Fire Code reviewers. One solution is for the fire code review to be conducted within the Building Department plan review and not as a separate review of the Fire Department.
- Concerns have also been raised about the Fire Department requiring equipment and systems that are in excess of the Fire Code. Once again the problems seems to stem from the inexperience and gaps in knowledge on the part of the Fire Department official.
- Project tracking must be improved and available on the Internet as is available in the City of Boise.
- Conduct a detailed review of the physical procedure followed by the Building Department once a building permit application submitted. It has been suggested that certain forms and procedures could be eliminated.

**Recommendation 3**

*Increase the quality – and quantity – of employee recognition.*

Ensure employees receive proper acclamation for their superior customer service skills. Ensure the equipment and tools they use match the city’s commitment to ensuring the Building Department is top-notch.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Assess the effectiveness of the city’s current internal and external communication efforts (including, but not necessarily limited to, employee newsletters, employee recognition, constituent communication and feedback, annual reports, media interactivity and public accessibility), comparing them with those of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the current internal and external communication efforts and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Research and evaluate the top municipal websites in the United States. Obtain information as to what hardware and software is used in maintaining the website and how city employees interface with the web server so timely, thorough and complete city information is disseminated via the website. Submit recommendations so as to ensure the City of Meridian’s website is on-par with the top city government websites of the United States.
- Evaluate the state of the city’s current information systems. Examine their effectiveness in easily delivering timely, thorough and detailed information to elected officials, employees and city residents (internal and external information flow).
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1
The average municipal Information Technology (IT) Department employs an average of 1 IT professional for every 87 municipal employees.

The Information Technology and Communication Unit surveyed the following cities, all with populations slightly smaller than that of the City of Meridian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State -- City</th>
<th>City Population</th>
<th>City Employees (Full-Time)</th>
<th>City IT Staff</th>
<th>IT Staff per number of City Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idaho – Meridian</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1 IT Manager, 1 Secretary/Receptionan, 1 Wiring/Telephony, 1 Networking Specialist</td>
<td>1 per 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho – Twin Falls</td>
<td>35,633</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1 IT Manager</td>
<td>1 per 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho – Coeur d’Alene</td>
<td>36,259</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>1 Network Systems Administrator, 1 IT Technician/Access Programmer, 1 Applications Database Developer</td>
<td>1 per 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho – Lewiston</td>
<td>30,487</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>1 Information Systems Mgr, 1 Network Administrator, 1 Operator/PC Support</td>
<td>1 per 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon – Lake</td>
<td>35,839</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>1 IT Manager</td>
<td>1 per 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Oswego | 1 Networking Specialist  
2 Programmers/Tech Support  
1.5 Peoplesoft |
|---|---|
| Utah – Murray | 35,055 | 378 | 1 MIS Director  
1 GIS Coord  
1 Sr. Programmer Analyst  
1 Network Administrator  
2 Programmer Analysts  
2 PC Support Specs  
1 Info Systems Technician | 1 per 42 |
| Utah – South Jordan | 31,816 | 280 | 1 IT Supervisor  
2 Technicians | 1 per 93 |

**Benchmark 2**
Specific, definable principles have been established governing municipal websites.

The Council for Excellence in Government (CEG) believes that e-government is instrumental in improving government performance at all levels. Implementing e-government systems requires unusual collaboration and partnership between the private and public sector, not only to create and sustain e-government but also to offer access and education to all Americans, address the digital divide and achieve genuine e-democracy.

The CEG has become a leader in promoting e-government implementation at home and abroad. Its deep commitment to this effort is apparent not only in the publication in 2001 of a widely-lauded blueprint for achieving e-government but also in the breadth of activity in which it has been engaged. The seven guiding principles for e-government defined by the CEG are:

1. Easy to use, connecting people with federal, state, regional, local, tribal, and international governments according to their preferences and needs.
2. Available to everyone, at home, at work, in schools, in libraries and other convenient community locations.
3. Private and secure, with the appropriate standards for privacy, security, and authentication-generating trust-required for e-government to grow and serve the public.
4. Innovative and results-oriented, emphasizing speed and harnessing the latest advances in technology.
5. Collaborative, with solutions developed collectively and openly among public, private, nonprofit, and research partners, on the basis of their experience and expertise.
6. Cost-effective, through strategic investments that produce significant long-term efficiencies and savings.
7. Transformational, harnessing technology through personal and organizational leadership to change the way government works, rather than merely automate existing practices.

**Benchmark 3**
City governments routinely implement systems that enhance employee/employer communication and ultimately increase employee, departmental and governmental morale.

A study of several city and county governments in Idaho and in the western United States demonstrates that some or all of the following are implemented on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis:
Regular e-mails from the elected official to all employees
- Internal newsletter
- Employee Recognition Activities/Ceremonies

**Benchmark 4**
City governments routinely implement systems that enhance the lines of communication between the city and the media.

A study of several city and county governments in Idaho and in the western United States demonstrates that some or all of the following are implemented on an as-needed, monthly, quarterly or annual basis:
- News Releases
- News Conferences
- Published Annual Reports
- “State of the City” Addresses

**Benchmark 5**
Successful city governments make the process of program improvement continuous by "closing the loop” – institutionalizing the process of finding program improvement initiatives and repeating it continually.

What is continuous improvement? In an October 1994 article in Quality Digest, Danny Langdon states, "Continuous (Process) Improvement is designed to utilize the resources of the organization to achieve a quality-driven culture. Individuals must think, act, and speak quality. An organization attempts to reach a single-minded link between quality and work execution by educating its constituents to ‘continuously’ analyze and improve their own work, the processes, and their work group."

One way of describing continuous improvement is:
1. Say what you do.
2. Do what you say.
3. Prove it.
4. Improve it.
5. Start the process again by saying what you now do after improvement and
6. Continue from Step 2.

### III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

**Benchmark 1**
The City of Meridian Information Technology Unit is a one-man show. Consequently, this person often spends his time working on “urgent and important” IT needs (“putting out fires”), sacrificing and diverting attention on macroscopic projects, such as network infrastructure development and long-range planning.

This difficulty is enhanced by the lack of a Wide Area Network server. This denies city departments the opportunity to operate as one networked system, increasing electronic collaboration and even sharing a common e-mail address directory.

**Benchmark 2**
The City of Meridian website currently offers basic information on its website regarding all city departments. However, it falls short in terms of the CEG’s seven guiding principles for e-government:
First and foremost, the city website must serve as a basic portal of information to the community. Although it is easy to use, it does not serve as a portal for current and prospective city residents to other governments.

Although it is available to everyone, it does not provide as in-depth information as could be delivered. Many pages are incomplete, out-of-date or not kept current, thus denying a positive customer experience to visitors.

No avenue for online transactions is afforded. It does not meet the appropriate standards for privacy, security, and authentication-generating trust-required for e-government to grow and serve the public.

It is not innovative and results-oriented, emphasizing speed and harnessing the latest advances in technology.

It does not display collaboration, with solutions developed collectively and openly among public, private, nonprofit, and research partners, on the basis of their experience and expertise.

It does not generate new cost-efficiencies through strategic investments that produce significant long-term efficiencies and savings.

It is not transformational, harnessing technology through personal and organizational leadership to change the way government works.

Benchmark 3
In her first month in office, Mayor De Weerd implemented a routine of regularly communicating with all city employees via an e-mail newsletter. This effort is to be commended, as several city employees indicated that the Mayor’s personal efforts at communicating with the employees have helped make employees feel more valued.

In some cases, city departments publish their own internal newsletters. In some cases, departments do not view internal newsletters with the degree of enthusiasm as displayed by others.

Citywide employee recognition activities and ceremonies are non-existent.

Benchmark 4
The Mayor is also to be commended for not only opening the lines of communication with the local media, but also encouraging city department directors to take an active role in informing area residents about the city and current efforts to improve the city’s quality of life.

In many municipalities, a mayor protects their position as spokesperson for the city with respect to any and all issues. In Meridian, it is apparent that Mayor De Weerd trusts city department directors with the flexibility and ability to clearly articulate city policies and procedures. In the estimation of this Transition Team Unit, this trust is well-deserved.

Benchmark 5
With the new administration, a tremendous amount of emphasis on continuous process improvement has been impressed upon city employees. Although consistent efforts still remain sporadic, other efforts deserve commendation. For example, the Mayor’s recent “Dumbest City Policy” contest, though lighthearted, cast light upon the Mayor’s vision for making city operations smoother, with the core recommendations coming from all levels of the city’s organization chart.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS
**Recommendation 1**  
Reorganize the city’s Information Technology Unit into a stand-alone city Department

The City of Meridian Information Technology Department needs to operate autonomously from any other city department. It needs to be its own stand-alone department.

It is ineffective to have one IT staff member servicing almost 200 full time employees. The city must hire a full-time IT Technician to augment what is being done by the IT Manager. In every other city surveyed, at least one IT Technician was employed to handle the daily demands of the city staff. This frees up the City IT Manager to focus on long-term planning, implementation and network administration. Estimated net salary of an IT Technician would be approximately $30,000.

This staff can be augmented by deploying interns, who are charged with more non-sophisticated tasks such as software and printer installation, enabling new e-mail addresses, etc.

The city should proceed with plans to purchase and utilize a state-of-the-art Wide Area Network (WAN) server. This server would vastly increase city employee collaboration and interdepartmental communication. Estimated price: $15,000.

**Recommendation 2**  
Provide external feedback and involvement into city IT operations

The Mayor and City Council should form a new City Information Technology Board.

Membership should be limited to seven individuals of combined concurrent and overlapping terms of office.

This Board would not necessarily set city IT policy, but rather, would provide external recommendations and, when specifically charged by the Mayor and City Council, provide planning oversight– and periodic reviews – of city IT projects.

This Board would be commissioned no later than May 1, 2004.

The first objective given the City IT Board should be to deploy a new city website by July 14, 2004 (see below).

**Recommendation 3**  
As a city, collaboratively design, deploy and continuously improve the most dynamic city website in the United States.

Nearly seven in 10 Americans have Internet access in their home, at school, or at work and 60 percent of Americans who use the Internet are interested in exploring e-government, according to a study by Hart-Teeter for the Council for Excellence in Government. That's a huge potential market.

While the current city website displays a lot of information, it also fails to meet much of the benchmarks associated with quality municipal websites. Other cities (recognized nationally as having the nation's top municipal websites) have pointed the way as to what to implement and what a website should look like.
Because of the non-availability of budget dollars to finance a complete re-write of the city’s website, and because of the Mayor’s stated goal to put in place a new website by the conclusion of her first six months in office (July, 2004), the Information Technology and Communication Unit recommends:

- Make, as a stated goal of the city that it will apply for and obtain recognition as a Savvy Award-winning website by 2006.
  - The Savvy Awards competition is sponsored by the 3CMA, and is held in cooperation with the National League of Cities. The Savvy Awards program incorporates the prestigious City Hall Public Information Awards Competition, sponsored for 17 years by City Hall Communications. The awards recognize outstanding local government achievements in communications, public sector marketing, and citizen-government relationships. The Savvies salute skilled and effective city/county/agency professionals who have creatively planned and carried out successful innovations. www.3cma.org
- Awards are presented for creative and successful programs in two areas: Communications Marketing Tools and Communications Marketing Processes.
- Processes are broad categories of activity, such as Citizen Participation and Communications Plans.
- Savvy Awards are given in 11 categories, which included 20 subcategories. For judging purposes, Savvy Awards are given for each population group in each category. Second-place Silver Circle Awards and third-place Awards of Excellence are also presented in each category.
- The city website should use as its template the municipal website of the city of Salt Lake City, UT (http://www.ci.slc.ut.us/). This website, viewed by all members of the Transition Team, combined aesthetically pleasing, simple formatting with thoroughness and depth in city online service. In other words, it was deemed as “the best of both (format and content) worlds.”
- Deployment of the website should occur in four phases:

**Phase I: Presence (Providing more – and better – information)**
This phase focuses on transitioning Meridian's website from "static information" to "dynamic information." Citizens have demanded the same level of customer service from public-sector organizations as they have come to expect from private-sector firms. Therefore, Meridian must provide a higher level of service to the customer. Investing in Government-to-Citizens (G2C) business solutions is the first step to achieving dynamic information services.

Using the Salt Lake City website as a template, it would be reasonable to assume that the City of Meridian website could contain the following features:
- Search engine
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Contact Us
- A left-hand toolbar with links to a City Directory, Online Services, News & Issues, About the City, Residents, Business, City Life and Get Involved and Youth.
- A center homepage which notes the top news of the day relevant to the City of Meridian.
- A right-hand pane that contains the city’s calendar of events (the actual calendar, not a link to the calendar)
- A bottom footer containing links to the Frequently Asked Questions, Contact Us, What’s New, Links, Privacy Statement and Site Info.

**Phase II: Interaction** (Providing greater interactivity)
This phase focuses on improving Government-to-Employee (G2E) and Government-to-Government (G2G) employee-facing business processes. This includes, but is not limited to, human resources management, payroll, benefits management and so forth. G2G enables Meridian to link to external agency sites for sexual-offender information, deadbeat parent filing and so forth. Also, this stage of development enables the public to access critical business forms online; download and/or complete electronically, then email to appropriate government departments.

- The City of Meridian website could feature hyperlinks on every page to a central e-mail address, which will be monitored on a regular basis for activity. Inquiries sent to the central e-mail address will be responded to immediately. Recipients will be informed that their inquiry has been forwarded to the appropriate department and that they should receive a response shortly. The initial inquiry itself will be forwarded to the appropriate city department, with the final response being copied to the city webmaster for confirmation that the inquiry has been responded to.
- The city website’s search engine will carry with it the ability to track and analyze website usage. Included in this analysis would be a listing of the top, most frequently-searched words and phrases. If a need is shown for a new webpage to be made based on a frequently-requested search word or phrase, the IT Board can recommend a new page be constructed.

**Phase III: Transaction** (Decreasing or eliminating the need to travel to or call city departments for information)
This phase focuses on processes which empower the public to conduct and complete entire tasks online (e.g., government-to-citizen business applications). The focus on this stage is to build self-service applications for the public to access online. A number of leading functions that can be migrated to this stage of development include utility payments, driver’s license renewal, procurement, permitting and licensing.

In a new report, the General Services Administration's Intergovernmental Affairs Board (IAB) provides five core reasons e-government is valuable to the public sector:

1. Financial: Reduced costs of government operations/enhanced revenue collection
2. Economic development
3. Reduced redundancy: Consolidating and integrating government systems
4. Fostering democratic principles
5. Improved service to citizens and other constituencies

The City of Meridian should endeavor to deploy a number of web pages designed to review or conduct city transactions on the internet. Where legally and statutorily permissible, such e-transactability pages could include:

- Events
  - Add an Event to the Citywide Calendar
- Public Safety
  - Parking Ticket Payments
  - Traffic Ticket Payments
  - Report an incident
- Human Resources
  - Online Job Application
Utilities
- View and pay your utility bill
- Authorize bank withdrawals for your utility bill
- Find out the garbage pickup schedule
- Request tree services

Parks & Recreation
- Recreation registration
- Park tables registration

Planning and Zoning
- Parcel search (linked to Assessor’s online database)
- Apply for a permit
- View the status of a permit
- Renew a Business License

City Clerk
- View bid opportunities and download forms
- Request a Voter Registration Form
- Find your polling location (linked to County Clerk’s online database)

Library
- Search the card catalog
- Apply for a Library Card

Animal Control
- View/Edit/Process Dog License Information
- View a list of Pets that are Available for Adoption

Economic Development
- Search for a Business

Mayor’s Office
- Provide input on city council agenda items

Phase IV: Transformation (Improving Government Services)
This phase focuses on redefining the delivery of government services. The goal is to drive new revenue generation and economic development opportunities by attracting new organizations. This phase relies on robust customer relationship management (CRM) business applications, wireless access devices and new methods of alternative service delivery capabilities that reshape relationships between citizens, businesses and governments. Examples of transformation may include individualized web sites in which government information is pushed to the citizen, with seamless interfaces back to the respective agencies involved in the transactions.

Increasing Business Application Complexity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-Government Services</td>
<td>E-Business Services</td>
<td>E-Collaboration Services</td>
<td>E-Business Services</td>
<td>E-Collaboration Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Customer Relationship Management Applications</td>
<td>- Self-service Applications – G2B and G2C</td>
<td>- Benchmark Portal Redesign</td>
<td>- Enterprise Portals</td>
<td>- Personalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Polling And Voting</td>
<td>- E-Procurement</td>
<td>- External Communications</td>
<td>- E-Forms</td>
<td>- E-market Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mission-critical</td>
<td>- License Renewals</td>
<td>- Internal – G2E Business Information Applications</td>
<td>- Permits Processing</td>
<td>- Service Delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Recommendation 4**
Enhance city communications

- **Internal**
  - It is recommended that the City of Meridian publish and disseminate a quarterly employee newsletter, which could feature:
    - Department News (submitted by various departments)
    - Employee Features
    - Employee News (births/deaths/golden anniversaries/etc.)
    - Employee Birthdays and Work Anniversaries
    - Message from the Mayor
    - Computer Usage Tips and Tricks
    - Training Workshop notes (for those who attended, for example, a customer service course)
  - **Employee Recognition**
    Internal communication can be directly linked to employee morale, in that the accomplishments and positive results brought about by employees deserves attention and recognition. The Mayor, City Council and Department Directors are encouraged to explore and implement ways to increase employee morale and recognition. Some government agencies choose to have a formal employee recognition ceremony on a quarterly, semiannual or annual basis. Yet others are less formal, where a Department Director and the Mayor take an employee out to lunch as a small token of their appreciation.
  - **New Employee Introductions**
    When a new employee is hired, an e-mail can be sent out to all city employees welcoming the new employee. Included in the e-mail can be the new employee’s name, title, department, and any other information deemed important.

- **External**
  The current city administration is doing an outstanding job in terms of proactively searching for ways to better inform the media about issues pertinent to Meridian, and in working with the media. Not only the Mayor and City Council, but also the city Department Directors and staff should be commended for their willingness and professionalism in working with area media.

  City government, especially the Department Directors, are encouraged to continue thinking of ways to better inform the public about what is happening in Meridian and its government, with regular news releases to be disseminated by the Mayor’s Office.

**Recommendation 5**
Foster an environment of continuous improvement

The so-called “quality revolution” that began in Japan during the postwar years and engaged America during the decade of the 1980’s is the basis for an operating philosophy and system of tools that is generally called “continuous improvement”. Continuous improvement is more than just better products and services. It is also about leadership practices. It is about finding ways for people to contribute with self-worth to work worth doing. It is about helping people find ways to work with their heads and hearts in addition to their hands and feet. The belief in continuous improvement is that ordinary people want to do a good job, that they will drive change through brainpower, and can learn the thinking tools when given a chance.

To ensure an environment of continuous improvement is in place, it is recommended that:
City employees, the City Council and Mayor should be required to participate in a training of continuous improvement and should learn to use the tools that are effective in the processes of alignment and improvement of services and job performance.

The City of Meridian benchmark could be Joint School District No. 2, which has been using the continuous improvement process for district and school improvement for five years and has successfully made major changes in the school system.

The Mayor would need to support the resources that would allow all city employees to be trained and require employees to participate.

The resources would be funds to pay for the training and time allowed for employees to go through the training.

City employees, City Council members and the Mayor should be able to complete the training within a year.

The fiscal impact of this training could be as much as $40,000 if employees are trained and paid during their non-work time. It could be considerably less if it is permitted during the regular workday.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Evaluate the city and community-at-large current new business recruitment efforts and incentives. Interview Meridian residents, business owners and municipal economic professionals from other cities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s new business recruitment efforts and incentives with those used in other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Recommend strategies for implementing a plan directed at business retention and attraction within the region.
- Interview various business owners in Meridian, obtaining their recommendations as to how the city can play a supportive role in business success and a positive business environment; better promote economic development and job creation.
- Recommend ways in which the city can promote new business development and job creation on its internet website, and how such a course of action would or would not be beneficial to the city and its residents.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

Issues Assessment

Meridian is a rapidly growing city, with a population in 1990 of 9,000 and a population today of 44,000—a 344% increase in thirteen years! According to The Hudson Company report presented November, 2003, the projected population over the next 10 years will be 64,000 and within 20 years will be 80-100,000. The population of 40,000 is within a 2.5-mile radius of downtown; within a 7.5-mile radius of downtown, the current population is 170,000; and within a 12.5-mile radius of downtown, the total population is 330,000.

The key demographics of the 44,000 Meridian residents are (HH = Household):

- Youngest in the Valley: 30 years old
- Highest % of children: 33.7%
- Largest HH size: 2.93
- Highest % of Families: 50% (Ada County = 38%)
- 2nd Highest HH income: $53,000 (Eagle = $65,000)
- 2nd Lowest HHs in poverty: 5.4% (Eagle = 4.8%)
- Lowest housing vacancy
- Highest Owner-Occupied HHs: 84% (same as Eagle) (House value is below Ada County average)
- Very low ethnic diversity

Meridian has been a “bedroom” community, where housing construction outpaced commercial construction by a wide margin. Some of the residents work in Meridian, however, the vast majority work elsewhere. Opportunities exist for businesses to start and/or expand in Meridian to provide employment to its residents and to provide services for the residents.

To evidence the fact that housing construction exceeded commercial construction in 2003, the following information was obtained from the City Planning & Zoning...
Department that shows the number of permits approved/in process/denied. The commercial permits are shown by number and by acres involved. The category “Other Commercial Applications” refers to those related to tenant improvements, as well as developments such as Meadow Lake Village by St. Luke’s Hospital.

### PERMITS ISSUED BY CITY OF MERIDIAN IN 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Acres*</th>
<th>In Process Acres*</th>
<th>Denied Acres*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>2425</td>
<td>935</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial/Office Rezones &amp; Annexation/ Zoning Applications</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Commercial Applications</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>290**</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Approximate number of acres
** Includes 138-acre CUP modification for Meadow Lake Village and 53-acre Jabil Subdivision (2-lot industrial).

To take this permit information a step further and equate the tax dollars to be generated for the city follows:

1. **Single Family**: 3,360 permits @ $120,000 average value = $403,200,000
   - Less: Homeowners Exemption = (168,000,000)
   - Net Taxable Value = $235,200,000
   - Levy Rate = .0029
   - TOTAL CITY TAX = $682,080

2. **Commercial/Office**: 18 permits @ $1,000,000 average value = $18,000,000
   - Levy Rate = .0029
   - TOTAL CITY TAX = $52,200

3. **Other Commercial Applications**: 37 permits @ $1,000,000 average value = $37,000,000
   - Levy Rate = .0029
   - TOTAL CITY TAX = $107,300

Information obtained from the Ada County Tax Assessor of **taxable values for 2002 and 2003** further point out the variance of residential growth, as compared to the commercial expansion in Meridian:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>% of total value</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>% of total value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential Taxable</td>
<td>$1,409,349,424</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>$1,205,360,461</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Taxable</td>
<td>$ 820,694,600</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>$ 796,022,850</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian MDC (urban</td>
<td>$ 10,356,000</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>-0-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>renewal agency)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$2,240,400,024</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>$2,001,383,311</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The impact of a company such as Jabil Circuits on a city’s taxes is significant, as shown below:

Jabil’s value was approximately $65,000,000 @ .0029 levy rate = $ 188,500
Current value is approximately $20,000,000 @ .0029 levy rate = $ 58,000
Loss of taxes to the City = $ 130,500

The value of new construction for 2002 and 2003 follows. However, these numbers may not translate directly to taxable values within one year, depending on the date of the permit being issued and the time to actual occupancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>% of total value</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>% of total value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>$ 78,401,952</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>$ 68,687,474</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Subdivisions/</td>
<td>$ 54,057,121</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>$ 33,413,700</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Status</td>
<td>$132,459,073</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>$102,101,174</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>$181,071,073</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>$132,133,800</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>$ 48,612,000</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>$ 30,633,800</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$181,071,073</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>$132,133,800</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order for the City to maintain and expand the infrastructure and level of service to support its rapid rate of residential growth, commercial growth is needed, as that is where the tax base is really derived to support the needed infrastructure and services. The reality of what the City derives in taxes from residential properties versus commercial properties is shown in the following examples:

**RESIDENTIAL VALUES:**

**Example 1.**
Average residential value: $160,000
Less: Homeowner’s Exemption (50,000)
Net: $110,000
Levy rate: .0029

**TOTAL CITY TAX** $ 319

**Example 2.**
Subdivision of 100 homes $16,000,000
Less: Homeowner’s Exemption (500,000)
Net: $15,500,000
Levy rate: .0029

**TOTAL CITY TAX** $44,950

19
COMMERCIAL VALUES:

Example 1. CitiCard call center (only office equipment, no machinery):

Building: 180,000 sq. ft. x $100 = $18,000,000
Assumed assessed value = $15,300,000
Levy rate: .0029
City levy tax = $44,370

Equipment: Estimated value = $4,000,000
Levy rate: .0029
City levy tax = $11,600

TOTAL CITY TAX = $55,970

Example 2. Micro 100 (manufacturing company):

Building: Assessed value = $2,048,275
Levy rate: .0029
City levy tax = $5,940

Equipment: Assessed value = $3,034,482
Levy rate: .0029
City levy tax = $8,800

TOTAL CITY TAX = $14,740

Example 3. Office building with 6 small offices with only equipment:

Building: 6,000 sq. ft. x $75 = $450,000
Assumed assessed value = $382,500
Levy rate: .0029
City levy tax = $1,109

Equipment: Estimated value: $5,000
x 6 businesses $30,000
Levy rate: .0029
City levy tax = $87

TOTAL CITY TAX = $1,196

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: Interactions with the Meridian Planning & Zoning Department
Approval of land use, land development, buildings, building use, and landscape plans. New businesses, expanding businesses or change of use will have to be reviewed and approved by Planning & Zoning.

Benchmark 2: Interactions with the Public Works Department
Provides essential services, including sewer and water, and plans for future population growth. Building inspections are also completed through this department. Currently the engineering review is outsourced.
Benchmark 3: Interactions with ACHD and COMPASS
COMPASS projects demographic growth and models long-term transportation infrastructure needs. ACHD uses these growth models and translates the forecasted road/intersection capacity needs into actual projects with short (<6 years), medium (6-10 years) and long term (11-15 and 16-20 year) timeframes.

Benchmark 4: Interactions with the Chamber of Commerce
Promote Meridian businesses. The Chamber collaborates with Boise Metro Economic Development Council (BMEDC) in attracting businesses to the Treasure Valley. A representative of the Chamber serves on the Board of the BMEDC and its site-selection committee. The Chamber responds to occasional leads provided by Shirl Boyce of the BMEDC with a list of suitable buildings or land parcels for build-to-suit.

Benchmark 5: Interactions with the Idaho State Department of Commerce
Promote and facilitate commercial growth and job creation in the State of Idaho. There are also numerous incentives and tax credits offered through this Department that can lower business costs and help increase profits for businesses. This Department is comprised of four major divisions (not including the recent merger with the Department of Labor and the new Office of Science & Technology).

Benchmark 6: Interactions with Commercial/Industrial Property Developers
The contacts that developers have with prospective buyers/lessees, provide a great opportunity to “team up” in their business development efforts in promoting economic growth and job creation in Meridian. These individuals all extended compliments to the City on the improved customer service attitude and method of processing applications over the past 6-12 months.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

Benchmark 1: Interactions with the Meridian Planning & Zoning Department
Reception of businesses by the staff, willingness to solve challenges and maintaining an efficient timeline of approval are key to attracting or retaining businesses. Business owners and developers who were interviewed during this study reported a major improvement in operations by the Planning & Zoning Department over the last 6-12 months. “The City of Meridian is very good to work with”, one real estate broker/developer remarked, who represents a large share of the business buildings/land inventory in Meridian. However, several issues came forth during the interview with the Department Director, as well as with developers who interact with the department on a frequent basis, that left room for improvement to make the City of Meridian more customer friendly, faster approval process, and more competitive with surrounding communities in terms of attracting or retaining businesses.

Benchmark 2: Interactions with the Public Works Department
The application approval process is often lengthy. A checklist for a plan review is provided, but often not followed. Projecting the future needs for sewer and water services requires plant facilities, as well as personnel.

Benchmark 3: Interactions with ACHD and COMPASS
The key issue with COMPASS is the underestimation of the explosive growth of Meridian. A quote made by a representative of COMPASS, “Eagle Road is exactly as we projected—it just happened 20 years early!” As a result, ACHD’s project prioritization has not kept up with the capacity strain on Meridian’s roads and intersections. Currently, the projections of COMPASS for the North Meridian area and the I84/10-Mile
Interchange impact area disagrees with the City’s and Developers’ projections of the growth of those two areas.

**Benchmark 4: Interactions with the Chamber of Commerce**

In the interview, it appeared that there has been no coordinated economic development effort taking place between the City and the Chamber with respect to inquiries from potential business interests or other business-related issues. Currently, there is no tracking or follow-up process of inquiring businesses by the Chamber. Furthermore, neither the City nor the Chamber maintains an inventory of the businesses located here in Meridian, and there is also no active, coordinated business retention and expansion program. There is also no strong communication network between the Chamber, the City and Idaho’s Department of Commerce.

**Benchmark 5: Interactions with the Idaho State Department of Commerce**

Tourism Development – This office administers the local 2% tourism tax, which enables annual grants to be provided to communities and tourism organizations. Grants range from $5,000-$500,000 and can be made available to advertise businesses, and to help establish an identity to attract visitors for lodging, food, beverage, recreation, and retail needs.

International Business Division – To expand the product sales of local companies to the international markets through distribution networks and trade shows. It has branch offices in some Far East countries, including China, that can help identify distributors and qualify customers.

Rural & Community Development – annually $10.5 million in HUD funds are available through Community Development Block Grants (maximum of $500,000 each per year) for construction of public infrastructure. Communities compete for these grants, matching 40-60% of the grant with project investment dollars and in-kind activities. Communities with a population greater than 50,000 can apply direct to HUD for annual maximum grants of $350,000-$400,000. These grants are considered for the following uses:

a. Economic development. To assist businesses that will be providing low- to middle-income jobs.

b. Downtown revitalization.

c. Senior center/community center.

d. Public facilities (sewer, water). City must commit 60%, with 40% from the grant.

e. Imminent threat (disaster).

Economic Development. Work force development is the key issue. There are training grants up to $2,000 for each new employee through the Department of Labor. There are several types of written materials that can be sent to prospective business owners.

**Benchmark 6: Interactions with Commercial/Industrial Property Developers**

Prospective buyers/lessees and other entities all extended compliments to the city on the improved customer service attitude and method of processing applications over the past 6-12 months.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is imperative that the City of Meridian develop a comprehensive Strategic Economic Development Plan (Timeline: 6 months). This will set a clearly-defined mission for the City of Meridian, with respect to balancing residential growth and commercial growth. It will identify goals and ways to measure them—both financial and non-financial. It will
identify key strategies to support the goals. And within each strategy, identify the tactics and time horizons for achieving the overall goals.

**Recommendation 1**
Review outdated ordinances; expand and modernize permitted uses changing some from “Conditional Use Permit (CUP)” to “Principal Permitted Use (PPU)”.

Establish an ongoing system of reviewing the approval processes to potentially shorten the approval time.

Review the need for the “Certificate of Zoning Compliance (CZC)” for simple requests or changes.

Empower the P & Z staff to make routine decisions so that only CUPs require approval by P & Z Commission and City Council.

Work with developers of commercial/industrial properties to establish flexibility for potential uses of their properties.

Planning Director should review the checklist and applications currently available on the website.

Provide training of new P & Z Commissioners and new City Council members.

Establish an electronic system throughout all of the City Departments to track applications submitted to P & Z, providing the customer access as well to track the progress of the application. This should help in coordinating other City Departments’ progress as well.

Transmit by email or CD as many documents as possible to the various agencies.

An inquiring party should obtain accurate information from a person that understands the entire permitting process (P&Z, Public Works, Building Inspections, Fire).

**Recommendation 2**
Consider having an engineer on staff, rather than relying on an outside consultant.
Determine staff requirements for expanded facilities.

Public Works Director should review the checklist and application on the website.

Establish a barcode system to track applications submitted to P & Z, providing the customer access as well as tracking the progress of the application. This should help in coordinating other City Departments’ progress as well.

Transmit by email or CD as many documents as possible to the various agencies.

Appoint an “expeditor” to monitor the application process.

**Recommendation 3**
Improve communication and coordination with COMPASS on forecasted demographic growth. Share updated Comprehensive Plan and latest changes with respect to land use and anticipated areas of commercial/residential growth.

Clearly communicate priority of projects to ACHD in an organized, coordinated format.
Empower City P & Z staff to make routine decisions to streamline the process.

Encourage developers to sell right-of-way land to ACHD at their purchase price.

Enhance the collaboration between developers and ACHD through prepaid impact credits.

Continue to resist “hop-skip-jump or leapfrog” developments.

**Recommendation 4**
Establish a business inventory. The city needs to consider creating a business registration process.

Track business inquiries, identify needs, evaluate success/failure and recommend improvements.

Promote state-wide and local initiatives to increase exposure of local businesses to markets abroad and large government/sub-contractor purchasing entities. The Idaho Department of Commerce is a resource.

Leverage membership with BMEDC -- improve the percentage of leads reported to Meridian and improve lead response/follow-up process.

Educate local businesses about state incentives, tax credits, low interest financing, and training reimbursements.

**Recommendation 5**
Neither the City nor Chamber of Commerce is currently taking full advantage of the grants available with the Tourism Development Division. Support is available to help Meridian develop a tourism niche focused on visitors passing through, or family and friends visiting the Treasure Valley.

Communicate the resources, expertise and business support programs offered by the Department of Commerce and Labor to local businesses as part of a comprehensive retention and expansion program.

Utilize resources at the department in providing cost-of-doing-business information to inquiring businesses.

Develop a long-range plan to include tourism.

**Recommendation 6**
Provide support for their sales efforts with written materials about Meridian.

Maintain constant dialog with them regarding the planning processes.

**Recommendation 7**
Appoint an Economic Development Specialist, or Economic Growth Coordinator. This exempt position would directly report to the Mayor and be located in the Mayor’s office. This person is to develop, implement and coordinate business expansion, relocation, and develop programs for business retention. (Timeline: 90 days)

Business Development:
Member and participant of area economic development organizations (Chamber, BMEDC, IEDA)

Coordinate information and activities of economic development: provide information about business support programs and funding availabilities. Spearhead IRB to help attract or expand businesses.

Track commercial/industrial application projects through the City and related agencies.

Evaluate and recommend improvement of processes and paperwork.

**Business Retention**

- Maintain database and regular contact with existing businesses and coordinate business visits, including to those developers outside of Meridian, by City Leadership, Department Directors and key citizen volunteers.
- Track business inquiries by type and work closely with Chamber’s business inquiries.
- Answer inquiries concerning small-business loans. Advise businesses with expansion plans of various market development financing, job training and business planning resources.
- Coordinate with state, federal and regional sources to assist in business expansion. Provide technical assistance to City in identifying business expansion by planning adequate infrastructure.

**Marketing**

- Provide Meridian specific site location information to businesses interested in locating in the Boise Valley.
- Establish a network of private and public contacts to market Meridian
- Prepare in collaboration with BMEDC and Department of Commerce cost, marketing and resource comparisons to recruit businesses. Research and provide information on regional utility rates, labor costs, fringe benefits, tax rates, worker's compensation, transportation costs, land use and capital formation resources and training programs.
- Oversee distribution of informational marketing publications to promote Meridian in cooperation with the Chamber.
- Develop a marketing plan specifically for Meridian to leverage the BMEDC and Department of Commerce marketing plan.

**Recommendation 8**

Create a business-friendly climate and enhance the City's ability to compete for expanding or relocating businesses (Timeline: Immediate/Ongoing)

Streamline logistics of permitting process, with the overall goal of shortening application/approval times by 50% or more and utilizing the staff more efficiently.

- Establish online permit process supported by project management software. (Timeline: 9 months)
- One stop “counter” permit process (possibly done online) for simple permits: at one “place” (possibly cyber) permits are reviewed by P&Z, building, plumbing, electrical and fire inspector in 2 day turn-around. (Timeline: 9 months)
- Staff empowerment of routine decisions. (Timeline: 6 months)
- Review “Certificate of Zoning” process as it adds time and uncertainty. (Timeline: 3 months)
- Update and modernize ordinances. (Timeline: 6 months)
- Template approval, or fast-track approval of defined, “standard” businesses in new business parks. (Timeline: 9 months)
- Examine the role of Planning and Zoning Commission. Empower for defined, routine decisions based on staff agreement. Comprehensive and timely training of new commission members. (Timeline: 6 months)

**Recommendation 9**
Enhance local business outreach by City Leaders and Department Directors (Timeline: Immediate/Ongoing)
- Welcome new businesses to the City
- Maintain regular contact with businesses. Spearhead business interviews by City Department Directors and designated volunteers reporting back to the city. Discuss needs and issues. Provide update on latest support programs available at the state or federal level. Offer tangible solutions.

**Recommendation 10**
Ensure optimal infrastructure of sufficient capacity for business parks (Timeline: 1 year)
- Facilitate the process of developers working with ACHD and essential City Services to advance projects by sharing costs and implement pre-paid impact credits.
- Communicate and align future plans for expanding sewer with other key infrastructure providers, i.e. power, fiber to leverage right-of-way and construction activities.

**Recommendation 11**
Strengthen the City’s relationship and effectiveness with Regional, State and Federal Agencies. (Timeline: Immediate/Ongoing)
- Participate in and leverage Regional marketing efforts and lead processing of BMEDC
- Network with Department of Commerce and Labor.
- Proactive interaction with COMPASS regarding land use growth regions within the City’s area of impact, i.e. projected growth for North Meridian and the I-84/Ten Mile interchange area.
- Communicate clear project priorities to ACHD
- Work with State and Federal legislators with respect to identifying the need for federal and state funds for large highway, overpass and interstate interchanges.

**Recommendation 12**
Create and preserve a sustainable ratio between commercial and residential growth in order to maintain a tax base for adequate municipal services, protecting the quality of life of Meridian citizens. (Timeline: Immediate/Ongoing)
- Establish statistical reporting of economic growth numbers, applications, revenue ratios of commercial vs. residential.
- Preserve prime commercial and industrial suitable land. Protect ratio of commercial versus residential in "mixed use" land/lot designations.

**Recommendation 13**
Ensure effective business attraction (Timeline: Immediate/Ongoing)

Develop a marketing plan that leverages the BMEDC marketing and lead processing efforts and develops a niche strategy/position for Meridian. Identify role for City and Chamber
- Website with pertinent information
- Develop positioning statement (elements: high quality workforce, prime market access)
- Define marketing/sales activities
Network with and leverage marketing activities of land developers and commercial real estate brokers.

**Recommendation 14**
Facilitate Start-ups/Entrepreneurs (Timeline: 1 year)
- Attract Business Incubation Services
- Support angel investors and availability of risk capital
- Promote products and services of start-ups.
- Speed up permit approvals by putting regulatory and licensing processes on-line
- Use one-stop business and licensing models.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine the city’s fire protection services. To interview the command and line staff of each entity, noting strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements.
- Recommend methods of reporting fire department statistics via the city website.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress and/or challenges.

City Governance

Vision: With the significant population growth, expanded service area, more residential and commercial development, shifting demographics and a continued emphasis on economic prosperity, the Fire Department will face escalating, more dynamic service demands, public expectations will increase, and emergencies will be more complicated, while financial resources will continue to be limited. To ensure the level of safety and security the community deserves, the department will seek every available means to provide emergency response within accepted standards, escalate its public education and prevention efforts, add essential resources, collaborate more effectively, and emphasize professional, cross-discipline specialized training.

Mission: To preserve lives and property by providing services to prevent and control fires, accidents, and other emergencies, while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness.

Staff size: 30 full time, 4 administrative, 10 part-time (on call).

Current year Annual Budget: $3,567,846.00; 25% paid by Meridian Rural Fire Protection Districts

Major Challenge Areas:

- Due to the expanded growth area, efforts must be concentrated on planning, designing, funding, staffing and completion of Station # 4, and then continue on with #5 and #6.
- Pursue avenues to increase all training, including EMS certification. Suggest a calendar designed to show the availability of all training well in advance.
- Provide for training facilities. Identify future needs via the strategic plan and begin working on them. Other issues include: reciprocating agreements with other areas, additional administrative staff and improvement of inter-department communication.

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: Staffing Levels
Maintain sufficient staffing levels in fire-suppression and fire administration positions in spite of the growth issues facing the City of Meridian. The national average of fire fighters is 1 per 1,000 residents.
The City of Boise has approx 200 fire fighters with a population of nearly 200,000 and nearby Nampa has a reported population of 62,000 and employs 57-fire suppression personnel and 10-Administrative.

While there are no specific staffing recommendations for the number of administrative personnel needed, it should be noted that departments experiencing significant new growth in their jurisdictions are often overwhelmed with the additional workload created by the plan review, permitting and inspection processes.

**Benchmark 2: Response Times**
Meeting nationally recognized response times for fire and emergency medical incidents. Fire Departments nationwide have typically used 4-5 minutes as an acceptable response standard for fire related emergencies. These response times have been established to allow fire fighters to reach the fire before it gets to the point of flashover or full-involvement thus allowing for extinguishment before substantial damage is sustained.

In addition emergency medical services are often provided by fire departments across the country. For departments providing this service the American Heart Association has identified specific response times for Basic-Life Support (BLS) service and Advanced-Life Support (ALS) services that provide optimal chances for favorable patient outcomes. The American Heart Association has outlined a 4-minute response for BLS and an 8-minute response time for ALS on 90% of response calls.

**Benchmark 3: Regional Cooperation**
Cooperative agreements and inter-agency collaboration between fire departments in the area is increasing as our communities grow closer together and sharing of resources becomes more practical and feasible.

Very few departments have the funding to provide the necessary resources to handle every type of emergency their community may encounter. Most departments rely on assistance from surrounding communities during major incidents through regional cooperative agreements known as mutual aid or automatic aid. Sharing or joint purchasing of facilities or equipment that could be used regionally could realize additional taxpayer savings.

**Benchmark 4: Training**
Fire departments are required to provide training to their personnel that meets specific national standards or competencies. A comprehensive departmental training program should be designed to meet nationally recognized standards such as the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) fire fighter I & II, Driver/Operator, Fire Officer, etc. Additionally, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) requirements may apply depending on the services offered by the department. These standards are the benchmarks used universally in the fire service to meet training requirements.

**Benchmark 5: Website development**
Many fire departments are turning to the Internet to assist them with delivering information about their departments to the public. With the multitude of requests for information that come into a fire department on a daily basis, it just makes sense to utilize this new tool in an effort to reduce staff time spent dealing with these requests. Fire departments are posting information such as job notices, job applications, fire & EMS statistics, fire safety messages, etc., on their websites in attempt to make as much information as possible available to the public.
Some departments are even exploring methods to handle tasks that traditionally required face-to-face or phone consultation to accomplish and making them available on-line such as burn permits, code enforcement forms, access requirements, etc.

**Benchmark 6: Public Education Programs**

One of the most effective ways to fight fires is to prevent them from happening in first place. Fire departments understand that fire prevention and education is one of the best tools they have in preventing fires. Delivery of fire prevention and public education programs is critical to the mission of a modern day fire department. The United States suffers one of the highest incidents of fires per capita of any of the industrialized nations in the world. The only way to combat this is through fire safety and education programs for citizens.

**Benchmark 7: Fire Department Reporting**

Elected officials and the public must be kept informed of the fire department’s activities. The fire department performs a variety of services to the community and must report activity levels to those that it works for. Reports should include at a minimum detailed monthly fire and EMS statistics, public education offerings, fire prevention & code enforcement activities, and any other items that demonstrate to the citizens the fire department’s contributions to the community.

Fire department reports are a valuable tool not only to show what the fire department has been doing but also to identify deficiencies such as slow response time, staffing shortages, etc.

Many departments are now exploring new ways to report traditional statistics that have been tracked such as response times. By reviewing the response times one can ascertain when the fire unit arrived. What response times does not tell is what effects their arrival had on the outcome of the situation. By taking a more in-depth look at some of the traditional reports one might discover that it is more useful to track a unit by the outcome of a timely arrival and what it meant to the given situation. For example, if the unit arrived within four-minutes of the call being placed to 911 on a cardiac arrest patient, it would be helpful to know if the patient lived or died as result of the arrival. By analyzing these types of calls, one may find that a large number of patients are still dying even though arrivals are consistently timely. This could also indicate that the level of training or certification should be increased so that units might perform more advanced life-saving skills. Another example could be in a fire situation where units arrive within a few minutes. However, in spite of valiant efforts, the building burns to the ground. This could mean several things: the unit may not be sending enough manpower to deal with the situation or perhaps they are not trained sufficiently to handle the situation when they arrive. Again, it could mean that the unit should have focused more in the area of fire inspections or code enforcement, thus preventing the fire in the first place.

**III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)**

**Benchmark 1: Staffing Levels**

As previously stated, the national average fire fighting staffing level is 1 fire fighter per 1,000 residents.

The City of Meridian's population is projected for the year 2004 to be approximately 44,000 residents. Current staffing levels are as follows: 30-fire suppression personnel, 10-part time on call (Volunteers) 4-Administration personnel.
Staffing shortages in either fire suppression personnel or administrative positions can have a measurable effect on the department. For example, if there are insufficient numbers of fire fighters on the scene of an emergency, specific tasks may have to wait or go unassigned while higher priority tasks take precedence. Searching for victims would naturally have a higher priority than ventilation. This could be dangerous to the fire fighters and victims if there is not sufficient manpower available to accomplish the needed ventilation. The result could mean a flashover or back draft situation if the ventilation needs are not attended to.

Likewise understaffing of administrative positions can have serious negative impacts on the organization. Much of an administrator’s job consists of support functions for fire fighters such as developing policies, training, education, budgeting, contracts, equipment purchasing, etc. If the administration is short-staffed, some of these functions will not get done. In addition, the administration is responsible for plans reviews, inspections, code enforcement on existing buildings, public education programs, etc. Staffing shortages in this area will result in delays getting new building plans reviewed and processed, inadequate or no on-site inspections and reduced public education offerings.

**Benchmark 2: Response Times**

To maintain acceptable response times as the City of Meridian continues to grow in all directions requires careful planning. The department is in a unique situation as it provides fire protection and EMS service to both City of Meridian residents and the Meridian Rural Fire Protection District. While it is normally accepted that a rural fire department with a large geographical response area and sparse population can expect increased response times, such is not the case in a city or more suburbanized setting. Meridian currently does not meet their stated objective of a 4-5 minutes response time.

The Meridian Fire Department currently provides Basic-Life Support (BLS) service only to its citizens. Ada County provides the Advanced-Life Support (ALS) services. However, neither agency is currently meeting the American Heart Association’s recommended standards on response times for BLS or ALS. By not meeting this standard, citizens of Meridian can expect to have a less-than optimal chance of surviving a severe cardiac arrest than those who live in a community where this standard is being met.

**Benchmark 3: Regional Cooperation**

Fire departments across the country have come to the realization that they will never have all the personnel and resources they desire to meet the needs of their community. Consequently, they have turned to regional cooperation to help fill their needs.

The Meridian Fire Department currently participates in several regional cooperative agreements and services. They have written mutual aid agreements with literally all of their neighboring fire agencies as well as the statewide mutual assistance agreement. They participate in the joint Ada County 911 Dispatch Center along with other emergency response agencies in the county. The Department is often called upon to host regional training classes and meetings due to their excellent facilities and central location in the Treasure Valley

**Benchmark 4: Training**

As previously outlined, fire departments are responsible to ensure that all personnel are properly trained to perform their job in a safe and professional manner. There are many nationally recognized standards that need to be adhered to when developing training programs and determining minimum levels of training required.
Meridian is currently requiring all new hired personnel to have the fire fighter I certification and emergency medical technician (EMT) certification prior to hiring. The Department provides additional training on shift and through classes offered both within the Department and at outside training classes, some of which meet nationally recognized standards and some of which don’t. Therefore, some of Meridian Fire Department’s personnel have met nationally recognized training requirements and some have not. However, since these classes are not required of everyone, there is considerable inconsistency among members.

**Benchmark 5: Website development**

While the fire department surely recognizes the unlimited possibilities associated with a website, there has been little or no emphasis placed on its development. This could be due to reasons previously stated in this report concerning lack of staffing and staff time to work on such product.

The Meridian Fire Department’s current web information is very limited and provides only basic information such as the department’s main fire station address, phone and fax numbers. There is a link to current news but no news is attached. Newly-elected Mayor De Weerd has identified the city’s website as a high priority for her administration. She is moving forward with plans to provide technology updates for the city.

**Benchmark 6: Public Education Programs**

The results of a major fire can devastate a community. If the fire occurs in a manufacturing facility, it could result in hundreds of jobs lost which would also affect the local economy for months or years to come. If it occurs in a facility with large numbers of occupants, they could be displaced or lives lost. Fires in educational facilities have resulted in students being bussed to other schools or districts with great additional expense. No matter how or when a fire occurs, its affects are wide spread. Anything the city can do to prevent a fire from occurring in the first place will save money, inconvenience, and suffering for our citizens.

The Meridian Fire Department has been very successful over the years in educating youth regarding the dangers of fire and how they can prevent them. Department members have given many hours of their own time to help with public education programs the Department offers. The Department has sent fire fighters into the schools every year to deliver fire safety education. Meridian also offers a juvenile fire setter program where children involved in setting fires are interviewed, given fire education assignments and referred to counselors if needed.

**Benchmark 7: Fire Department Reporting**

Meridian fire fighters fill out incident reports on all fire and EMS incidents they respond to. These reports are generated in a software program that is designed to be a complete fire department records management system. This program also has the capability to track training records, occupancy inspections, inventory, personnel records and many other items.

The Meridian Fire Department currently provides reports to the Mayor and Rural Fire District Commissioners that indicate the number and type of calls responded to in a given month and on an annual basis. Special reports can be generated if requested showing response times, fire loses etc., but are not provided routinely.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**
**Recommendation 1**
Enhance staffing levels.

As the City of Meridian continues to grow, the number of fire fighters should also increase proportionately. Meridian should continue with its current practice of using part-time on-call personnel to enhance staffing levels. This is a very cost-effective method of providing additional personnel only when needed and gives the fire department the opportunity to observe an individual’s work ethics before hiring, as many of these individuals go on to become full-time employees at a later date.

The City should make every effort possible to hire additional personnel in administration at this time. This currently appears to be one of the department’s weakest areas. Many concerns raised were a direct result of understaffing in this area. Once additional staff is hired, a complete analysis and restructuring of administrative assignments should be considered.

**Recommendation 2**
Improve response time.

While it may be true that Meridian does not currently meet their goal of a 4-5 minute response time, it should plan to build satellite fire stations throughout the city as it endeavors to meet this objective. To accomplish this goal, the fire department will need to secure properties prior to building to ensure proper locations and response times for future fire stations.

The fire department should also aggressively pursue all options available to come into compliance with the nationally accepted standards for medical responses, up to and including increasing the department’s certification level from BLS to ALS. The department’s administration should become more active in this process and the efforts occurring in the region concerning this matter.

**Recommendation 3**
Explore greater regional cooperation.

As stated earlier, cooperative agreements and inter-agency collaboration between fire departments and other emergency responders in the area should increase as the cities in the Treasure Valley grow closer together and sharing of resources becomes more practical and feasible.

In interviews conducted with members of the department, additional needs were identified such as training facilities, an aerial ladder truck, etc. Meridian should explore regional partnerships to meet these needs, share costs of facilities where practical and find ways to share resources, thus reducing the need for each community to purchase equipment that could be used regionally such as aerial trucks which can carry price tags in excess of $750,000.

**Recommendation 4**
Provide excellent training

Training is a key component of any successful modern day fire department. How the fire department is viewed in the community is often a direct reflection of the training and skills possessed by its members. During interviews conducted with department members, training was identified as one of the highest priorities for the fire-suppression crews and one of items most ignored by the department.
Several members of the department have offered their services to assist the department with training and pledged to continue their support in this area.

Meridian Fire Department administration and members of the department should meet and identify minimal training standards needed for all members of the department. A training analysis should be conducted to determine what additional training and certifications are desirable. A realistic budget that allows for the accomplishment of the training objectives and maintenance of the personnel’s continuing education should be developed. A yearly training plan and schedule should also be developed which allows all members of the department to view what classes are scheduled and who is attending to avoid future conflicts.

Recommendation 5
Provide more information via the city website.

Having an updated and useful website offers many advantages to an organization such as the fire department. It can increase efficiency of staff time thus allowing for the completion of more critical tasks. The web can be a wonderful tool and should not be overlooked by any organization.

While understanding the difficulties in finding the time for the administration to create an optimal website it is plausible to find that the necessary expertise may already exist in the department. Many organizations have individuals who would appreciate the chance to be involved in such a project and may be just waiting to be asked. If no one can be found within the department, there are many other organizations ready to assist. At a recent transition team meeting featured several interested parties, including students involved in website design classes that offered assistance to the city.

In conclusion, the Department should explore whatever avenues are at its disposal to design, create and manage a web page on the city’s existing website and search for creative solutions to traditional problems through the use of technology.

Recommendation 6
Expand Public Education Programs.

The value of fire prevention and public education programs in reducing the loss of lives and properties are well documented. America continues to have one of the highest rates of fire per capita of any of the industrialized nations. The city must do more to educate the public on methods to reduce fires.

A grant received by the Department will enable the Department to build a special classroom designed to teach children and adults about fire safety education. This building, when completed, will feature a smoke room, burn room and fire sprinkler room all designed to demonstrate the dangers of fire and methods to prevent it.

A closer look at the Department’s break down of calls by incident type indicates that the majority of incidents responded to are medical emergencies. Because of this, the Department may want to look at developing public education programs targeted at reducing calls of this nature. Many departments are offering programs such as fall prevention education for seniors, or placing automatic defibrillators in public gathering places. As the role of the fire department changes, so should its focus on public education programs.
Recommendation 7
Heighten Fire Department Reporting.

Fire department administration and personnel should work with elected officials and the public to determine what information is valuable. Often, many interested parties may not know what types of information or reports are actually available. The department may want to include much of this data on its web page as it is developed.

The fire service prides itself on planning and preparing for emergencies. For proper strategic planning to occur, statistical information must be analyzed and interpreted before a course of action can be planned. Many courses are offered that can give key personnel in an organization insight into this process (such as those offered through the National Fire Academy) at little or no cost to the Department. Meridian would be well-served to avail itself of these opportunities.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine the city’s current Human Resources Department. Interview city employees and HR professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights on policies and training. Compare the city’s Human Resources Department with those of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the current Human Resources Department and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Evaluate the city’s current contract approval process. Interview past contractors and contract professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s contract approval process with those used in other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Recommend ways in which the city’s Human Resources Department could make better use of the city’s use of the website.
- Examine the city’s current customer service attitudes, systems and initiatives. Interview city employees, city residents, business owners and customer service professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s customer service efforts with those of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses in our customer service delivery and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Look at the feasibility and process for employee customer service feedback “how am I doing” card.
- Recommend ways in which city employees can be better trained in customer service and how their training can be integrated with their annual performance evaluations.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

Issues Assessment

A properly functioning Human Resources Department is the cornerstone in the building and support of each city department. The City of Meridian has a full time Human Resource Department that appears to rank well with other similar city HR Departments. Employees are generally happy with both benefits and policies. A strong desire for customer satisfaction and pride in service is apparent in every department. The HR Department has helped other departments facilitate recruitment of new staff. The HR Department also maintains personnel records and assists with employee promotion and discipline matters. The Department assists in interpretation of employment policies, guidelines and laws which impact the ability of departments to attracts and retain high quality employees.

Some strategic planning is necessary in the area of training, needs assessment and delivery. Regularly scheduled training on city core values should be offered.

II. BENCHMARKS
As a unit, we interviewed a total of sixteen city employees, a minimum of one from each division, area, or office including but not limited to: Fire, Police, Sewer & Water, Planning & Zoning, Parks, Public Works, Accounting and Finance, and Utility Billing. In addition we interviewed three municipalities and five corporations.

**Benchmark 1: Human Resource Methods**  
A comprehensive employee handbook provides information for employees and management to ensure that all policies and benefits are clearly explained. New employee orientation should cover information regarding policies and practices, employee benefits, discipline policies, and job expectations.

Each position has a written job description that includes the responsibilities, duties, experience requirements, educational requirements, and specific skill requirements. Each new employee is given a copy of the job description.

The employee appraisal process used by some employers establishes a rating system that easily evaluates the performance of the employee. The evaluation system should encourage personal continuous improvement of each employee. The evaluation process should set clear objectives for the employee to achieve on an ongoing basis.

Step programs and merit pay programs are widely used. During the downturn in the economy however, pay raise policies for most employers have been modified to reflect the marketplace. Many employers were unable to give raises. Each position has an appropriate pay range established for the position. Ranges are reviewed periodically to assure they continue to reflect market trends.

**Benchmark 2: Attracting and Retaining Employees**

Most employers offered standard training for employees on a regularly scheduled basis covering changes in policies and practices, benefits, EEOC policies, and harassment policies. Overall staff development, training plans and job specific skill development plans were also available to employees. Some employers chose to outsource this training while others conduct ongoing training opportunities. In addition some employers offer a variety of programs including brown bag lunch topics, wellness programs, and stress reduction programs.

Standard hiring policy and practice procedures are available online for not only private business but also some cities and state agencies. In some cases the application process can be completed and submitted online.

In today's marketplace we found that there are many applicants for each job opening. Job fairs, listing openings with university placement offices and job service generally provide many qualified applicants.

**Benchmark 3: Employee Recognition**

Employers interviewed chose to have semi annual employee recognition events. Most meetings were held in conjunction with an all staff training event or an employee appreciation luncheon. Two meetings were offered to enable half of the staff to attend at a time during work hours. Some employers chose to have an after hours event, i.e. company picnic or holiday potluck. Certificates were issued to employees for exemplary customer service, longevity and participation in community events.

**Benchmark 4: Benefits and Services Contracts**
Benefits and service provider contracts are reviewed on an annual basis for competitive bidding. Performance standards are established and evaluated regularly.

**Benchmark 5: Community Identity/ City Outreach**

Many companies and public employers encourage employees to participate in activities associated with the United Way Campaign, Paint the Town and Civic Organizations. This boosts the morale of the employees and gives them a sense of community and value.

**III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)**

The city has been successful in many of the above suggested benchmarks. Employee retention is higher than average, and morale is high with few exceptions.

The Human Resources Department should operate in a proactive manner to advance, encourage and enforce the systematic and consistent implementation of policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure employees are managed and motivated by the most effective means.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1**

Presently the City of Meridian lacks an employee recognition and merit pay policy. A plan needs to be implemented that will encourage staff to achieve outstanding performance.

**Recommendation 2**

Measurable goals need to be established around the following: Employee turnover, morale, employee development, and employee communication.

- There are efforts in some departments to give various forms of recognition, however it is inconsistent, and not identified as employee recognition per se. In Planning and Zoning they pass around a “pen”; Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant have quarterly awards.
- Clothing is provided citywide among departments and should be seen as an incentive.

**Recommendation 3**

Establish uniform orientation and training processes.

- A lack of continuity in the orientation and training processes for employees in departments other than Public Safety were noted.
- Each employee should keep abreast of industry specific changes that may affect the capabilities of their department.
- Regularly scheduled training on the city’s core values should be offered.
- Provide training opportunities for better interaction with customers, coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates.

Brown bag lunch topics could include:

- Customer service, policy and benefits updates, wellness programs, balancing work and family, and dealing with stress.

**Recommendation 4**
Review the paid holiday policy congruent with city standards of equal earning and usage rates across all non-union departments.

- It is our understanding that the Police Department earns their holiday, sick, and vacation time in eight (8) hour increments, as do other city employees. It appears they “burn” their time in ten (10) hour increments, thus creating a disparity of 2 lost hours in the factoring of their accumulation of time off and/or pay.

- It was explained to our unit that the city cannot account for the shift differential of their ten hour shifts versus the city standard eight hour shift. We would recommend a review of this possible misalignment.

**Recommendation 5**
Employ the services of an outside consulting firm for an in-depth evaluation and needs-based review.

Due to the extremely broad scope of the subject matter and the litigious nature of Human Resources in general, our Unit would recommend the use of an outside consulting firm for an in-depth evaluation.

The use of an outside consulting firm can serve as an as-needed, cost-effective resource to an already-existing HR Department. The city has used an outside consulting firm in the past in a minimal capacity in creating employee handbooks.

A qualified consulting group can provide substantial support and insight to an existing HR Department, at a fraction of the cost of one new employee.

The following areas of expertise may be offered by consulting firms that could benefit Meridian’s HR efforts.

- Employee Opinion Surveys
- Web-based metrics tools for goal tracking
- Web-based tools for productivity measurement and accountability
- Peer surveys and “360 reviews”
- Communication
- Curriculum development
- New employee orientation procedure

**Recommendation 6**
Integrate private-sector solutions in developing public-sector strategies.

The City of Meridian is a fast growing community with fundamental values, lifestyles and a blossoming business community of both professional and industrial businesses. In an effort to integrate such a broad based community with a city government, while providing the ultimate customer service experience. We would recommend most benchmarks be sought from public and private sector corporations as the Mayor moves forward.

Modeling Human Resource Divisions, policies, and employee training after A+ companies would enable the City of Meridian to step outside the parameters set forth by many municipalities that have become restrictive in nature and ultimately regressive in function. Years ago the corporate sector began to model their policies and procedures after the well thought out and proven municipal governance system. Times have changed and as with all cycles, they come full circle.

**Recommendation 7**
Develop a standardized bid review process for benefits and service contracts.
Although no issues regarding contracts were noted from those interviewed, there are always improvements to be found. A formal process for reviewing existing contracts should be considered.

**Recommendation 8**

Establish a plan to empower employees. The HR Department can help build pride in employees, which extends to community participation, volunteerism, branding Meridian as the city that cares for its employees who in turn care about the community.

Encourage employees to continue to participate in community events such as parades, chili feeds, Big Brothers and Sisters, Boys and Girls Club, Dairy Days, Fire Fighter’s annual Salmon Bake, Scarecrow Festival etc.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- To investigate and recommend methods in which the Mayor and City Council can better lead and provide guidance to Department Directors as well as city residents, regional boards and commissions.
- Evaluate how municipal elections are conducted and how polling places, financial disclosure reports and election results can be better publicized. Examine municipal election efforts in other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest and recommend enhancements, if necessary.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

Issues Assessment

Regular and comprehensive communication is a major factor in providing direction to Department Directors, boards and commissions and city residents. Mayor and Council planning sessions, scheduled Department Director meetings with the Mayor and interaction with citizens on a regular basis are necessary to enhance communication and feedback, which leads to better governing.

City Council liaisons have become more active with each department, creating more opportunities for interaction and ideas.

One of the more difficult aspects is involving citizens in the communication process. Often their only involvement is through city processes – paying the sewer bill, buying a dog license or finding out that the farm next to them will soon be a subdivision. To bring city residents together in a greater degree of involvement and loyalty to their city, more avenues of communication need to be employed.

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: Citizen Engagement

A successful model of citizen input and involvement in the planning and policymaking process can be found in Boise’s neighborhood associations. The associations play an important role in communicating their area’s needs and desires to elected officials as well as providing an avenue of communication for city staff and the Mayor and Council to contact regarding ideas or potential controversies.

In Boise, it took the neighborhood associations many years to spread throughout the city to become a viable avenue of communication. Many of the associations are found in the older, more established areas of the city. Within Meridian’s city limits there are very few identifiable, long term neighborhoods, particularly outside of the “Old Meridian” area. While the neighborhood association model should serve as a goal to be established throughout the city, an initial effort of communication should be focused on the homeowner organizations. Many of the more active homeowner organizations have an organized structure with newsletters, neighborhood events and involved citizens running the association.
III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

Benchmark 1: City Elections
Currently only four polling places – the Library, City Hall, American Legion Hall and a Grange Hall - are used for city elections in Meridian. Two of the polling locations, City Hall and the American Legion Hall, are located only one block apart.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
Identify and communicate with Meridian’s homeowner associations.

Recommendation 2
Utilize representatives of the homeowner organizations in regional areas for feedback on regional issues and concerns.

Recommendation 3
Actively support and encourage the development of neighborhood associations throughout the city.

Recommendation 4
Encourage greater participation on city Boards and Commissions

Participation on boards and commissions can also be encouraged through homeowner organizations. With productive communication established, openings on city commissions can be announced through the associations. Citizens wanting to be involved may be more likely to provide their name for consideration through that process than through a small article in the newspaper.

Recommendation 5
Fully utilize the city’s web site to enhance citizen participation on boards and commissions.

The city’s website needs to contain a page which outlines the responsibilities of each board, length of terms, time commitment and other vital information for an interested citizen to make an informed decision about potentially serving. This webpage should also have an application form that can be printed or e-mailed for return to the city. Listing the citizens who currently serve on the boards and commissions also needs to be posted on the website.

Recommendation 6
Increase the number of polling locations for city elections.

Recommendation 7
Utilize temporary signage near polling locations for better visibility and reminder of election.

Recommendation 8
Enhance the city’s website to show polling places, provide information on how to register and obtain an absentee ballot.
Links to the Ada County Elections site should be added to allow users to find additional election information.

**Recommendation 9**
Continue cross training of staff and adding additional staff when warranted to allow the city to adequately serve a growing public.

As the Mayor and City Council lead the city in a positive direction and increase their efforts in talking and listening to citizens, businesses and neighboring municipalities, the workload on city staff serving the elected officials will increase dramatically. As the city prepares budgets, it is critical that adequate support staff for the elected officials be included.

**Recommendation 10**
Review breakout of responsibilities in the City Clerk’s office related to planning and zoning issues.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Assess the state of the city’s parks system, and how current parks can be enhanced and new park areas can be acquired.
- Investigate ways to increase the dialogue and cooperation between city leaders and Department Directors and the area school districts.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a permanent ‘Mayor’s Youth Council’ which will work with the Mayor’s office in addressing the needs of area youth and encourage youth involvement in community planning and enhancement efforts.
- Investigate and recommend ways in which the parks system as well as youth involvement can be integrated with the City of Meridian website.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress, as needed.

Issues Assessment

The growth of Meridian over the past decade has brought tremendous challenges to the parks system in Meridian, and to the many youths who use the facilities on a daily basis. With 44,000 residents, Meridian is faced with walking a fine line of promoting economic growth, while also providing the parks and recreation services that have made Meridian a great place to earn a living and raise a family. With too much growth the available parks and amenities lags behind. With too little growth the city will lack the revenue necessary to provide the Parks Department all of the tools needed to maintain and develop existing park space. It is critical to the 10,000+ children that live in Meridian and their families, and to the preservation of Meridian’s overall quality of life, that the development of existing and new park facilities remains a high priority for the foreseeable future.

City Governance

The Meridian Parks and Recreation Department (MPR) maintains 90.6 acres of developed park land, 9.5 acres of small non-park acres (i.e., Generations Plaza), and 3.5 acres of pathways for a total of 104.62 developed acres. The MPD also maintains 117.6 acres of undeveloped park land as needed to control weeds. This land is maintained by one Parks superintendent, one construction maintenance technician, one fabrication shop worker, three full-time grounds keepers and three seasonal groundskeepers.

The annual budget for this department for fiscal year 2003-2004 was $2,224,327.00.

Mission: “The department’s mission is to enhance the community’s quality of life by providing well-designed and properly maintained parks and recreational opportunities for all citizens. Services include development and maintenance of parks, sports fields, pathways, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and memorials in addition to developing and offering a wide variety of group and individual recreational programs.”

Vision: “The department anticipates continued population growth within the service area, bringing escalating demand at a time when funds are limited, outdoor facilities will
remain insufficient, and support for indoor facilities will lag behind community need. To ensure the best possible use of resources as public demand grows, the department will seek creative options to build facilities and offer new programs through private-public partnerships, by seeking and utilizing grant funds, and promoting collaboration with service agencies to provide exceptional parks and recreational programs for the community."

**Major Challenge Areas**

The strategic plan for the Parks and Recreation Department set forth some challenge areas which were confirmed in our interviews and apply directly to the specific objectives of our transition team. Those include:

- Increase available indoor recreational facilities to accommodate public needs and growing sports team demands, and which may include an investigation into the feasibility of a community recreation center.
- Increase available developed outdoor park space to get closer to the national average of eight acres per thousand residents (Meridian is at approximately three acres per thousand now).
- Continued maintenance of existing developed park space, including the drainage problems existing at Tully Park and Generations Plaza, and the sprinkler system problem at the 8th Street Park.
- Provide adequate staffing to maintain these existing parks, but also develop new park space, without creating the added expense of overtime pay for staff and delays in completion that go along with this.
- Create a strong working relationship with the Meridian School District that will allow a more efficient and fair use of limited land and facility resources.
- Research additional funding sources, such as impact fees and state and federal grants, to assist in providing the necessary funding to meet these challenge areas.

**II. BENCHMARKS**

**Benchmark 1: Amount of Developed Park Land**

Provide enough developed open space park land in the Meridian area to be within the recommended minimum of 6.25 acres per 1,000 population, as suggested by the National Recreation and Park Association.

Currently, the national average for like-sized cities (25,000 to 200,000 population range) is 7.4, as published by the International City Managers Association, Comparative Performance Measurement Consortium, Parks and Recreation Services FY2000.

Provide a working partnership between the Meridian Parks and Recreation Department and the Meridian Joint School District #2. Sharing building space as well as open spaces extending 385 sq. miles which is the total size of the school district.

**Benchmark 2: Mayor’s Youth Council**

Operation of a Youth Council that is diverse, enthusiastic and empowered with the resources necessary to participate in the improvement of Meridian’s parks and recreation vision. This benchmark is being met in hundreds of cities throughout the country, from large cities like Indianapolis, to smaller cities like Nampa and Caldwell, Idaho.

**Benchmark 3: Parks and Recreation Website**
Provide timely and accurate information via the city website on at least a weekly basis. This information should include a monthly event calendar that is easy to use, updated status of sports events standings and schedules, and easy access to the majority of public forms required for business use.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

Benchmark 1: Amount of Developed Park Land
Currently, the City of Meridian provides 2.3 acres of developed open space park land per 1000 residents, far short of the national average and short of the recommended amount by the National Recreation and Park Association.

Since 1996, The City of Meridian has significantly increased its 1.5 acres/1000 residents average to current levels.

The city has experienced a population explosion of nearly 300% from 1990 to present.

The city recently increased the park impact fees 26% to $667.39 per single family home and $607.14 per multi-family unit, the first time since 1996, when fees were initially collected.

Currently there is limited partnering with the City of Meridian and the Meridian Joint School District #2.

Meridian City currently has limited use of multi-purpose spaces, gymnasiums and open field space to run city sponsored programs to meet the fast growing demand of citizens.

Benchmark 2: Mayor’s Youth Council
Meridian does not meet this benchmark, as no Youth Council has yet been formed. The successful formation of the Meridian Youth Council will be dependent upon the support and involvement of the Mayor and a small amount of seed money from grants, the city or the community to get it started, and assistance from area high schools in the application process. There are grants available for the formation of a Youth Council, most notably through the Idaho Association of Cities. It will also be necessary to participate in some meetings with Nampa and Caldwell’s local Youth Council and learn from their successes prior to implementation of one in Meridian.

Benchmark 3: Parks and Recreation Website
The city’s website currently provides a minimum level of customer service abilities, thus only partially meeting the benchmark as established. There are many items on the website that are available, but are not necessarily presented in an efficient manner. There is also no current e-commerce capability, which would greatly increase the self-service factor sought out and available in wide use on comparable websites.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
Aggressively develop park land to increase the average for the city.

Achieve a level of 5.0 acres of developed open space park land per 1000 residents by 2008, and achieve 8.0 acres of developed open space park land per 1000 residents by 2010. While the first level is below the recommended amount, it is a more reasonable goal to achieve in a short period (4 years).
This recommendation should be implemented as a priority item of the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Parks Director and the Recreation Superintendent. The commissioners and directors should also inform and update the Mayor, Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council of the priority of this recommendation, which will allow all those generating policies and making important, direct impact decisions to help achieve this goal.

Several resources are needed in order to achieve this recommendation:

- **Additional Land**: If the city’s entire undeveloped park land were converted to usable open space park acreage, it will only increase the city’s average to 4.9 acres per 1000 residents.
- **Additional Funding**: While Meridian increased the park impact fees in the last year, these fees are below the level that Boise charges, and well below the national average of just under $2,000. Currently, it is estimated to cost nearly $1,500 per household to develop the park system in Meridian.
- **Cooperation with local organizations**: It is currently not feasible to develop this amount of acreage with existing funding levels. It is imperative that the city enter into agreements with local organizations in need of developed park land for specific usage and a source of sufficient funds will allow both organizations to achieve goals not possible individually. These partnerships will also allow the critical city funds to be re-directed to purchasing new land, which should be a very high priority.

The fiscal impact of this recommendation is outside the current funding sources for the Parks and Recreation Department. While it is our belief that the current administration does not desire any increase in burden on the City of Meridian tax base, it is our assessment that additional funding sources will be necessary in order to fulfill this recommendation. Meridian’s Comprehensive Parks and Recreation System Plan, dated August 2003, reviewed potential funding sources. While there are many listed, here are the committee’s suggested sources:

- **Grants**: Grants are available from federal, state and private sources for a wide variety of projects. Grants can be up to 100 percent of project cost. A professional grant writer within the city could generate enough funds for the Parks and Recreation Department, as well as other departments within the city, to pay for that individual and still achieve a goal of funding specific needs within the city.
- **Joint Public/Private Partnerships**: This concept allows a public agency (the city) to enter into an agreement with a private for-profit or not-for-profit organization to help fund, build and/or operate a public facility. This option allows the organization to largely fund the development of park land in cooperation with the city while reserving access to this development for certain periods of time, allowing for their activities. The city is currently in this type of agreement with a couple of organizations and has plans to negotiate more in the near future.
- **Park Impact Fees**: While the Park Impact Fees were increased a year ago, these fees continue to be below local comparable levels and well below the national average of $2,000 per household. It may be necessary to increase these fees once again or to investigate a method of instituting an annual percentage increase to allow for inflation.
- **Bonds and Levies**: While these voter-approved methods of funding can be point specific (such as capital improvements) and generate a large sum of funds in a short period of time, they do increase the tax burden on the citizens of Meridian and should be used only as a last resort.

- A representative from the Meridian Joint School District #2 should serve as a member of the Meridian Parks and Recreation Commission. Having these two entities working closely together will benefit both the city and school district in a more
timely and efficient manner. This will help facilitate better communication and a partnership between the two entities, which is long overdue. It is this team's opinion that it would be possible to enter into a partnership agreement beneficial to both parties within a couple of months of the publishing of this report.

- Having a school district representative attend regular city staff meetings with the Parks Department will increase the communication and expand the partnership between the school district and the parks and recreation department.
- Draft an agreement between both parties making it equally beneficial.
- Current planned park improvements should be closely looked at and re-evaluated (necessity vs. desirable upgrade). These funds can be re-directed to the purchase and development of new lands not currently owned by the city.

**Recommendation 2**
Form a Mayor’s Youth Council.

The formation of a Mayor’s Youth Council in Meridian should not be a question of “if” but of “when.” The recommendations below require that the Mayor be personally involved to assure that this project has the credibility and support it needs and deserves. The following recommendations can and should be met to provide for an active Youth council operating within the next ten months:

- April-June, 2004: Observe other local youth councils and outline a framework of Meridian’s Youth Council structure.
- July-September, 2004: Complete the By-Laws for a School District Youth Council and an application process for all Meridian high schools. The Mayor should visit each high school and speak to their government classes about civic involvement and community growth, and inform them of the opportunity to have a say in what Meridian does for our local youth by encouraging all of them to apply to sit on the Council.
- October, 2004: Select the composition of the Mayor’s Youth Council.
- November, 2004: Conduct the inaugural meeting of the new Mayor’s Youth Council for Meridian.
- The Youth Council should be focused on meeting the following parameters at all times:
  - Let the youth lead and make decisions. If youth have the opportunity to voice their interests from the beginning, they are likely to be more invested in the project.
  - The Mayor’s role should be to make sure the youth stay on track and to ensure they are directed towards the information needed to make their efforts a success.
  - When the youth lead, ask that they “return & report.” Always ask that the accomplishments of the Youth Council are reported to the city or civic leaders on a regular basis.
  - Make efforts each fall during the application process to reach out to diverse groups of young people in forming the Youth Council. Look to have a blend of socio-economic, ethnic and academic levels and interests to assure a broad cross-section of youth has the chance participate.
  - Select initial strategies carefully. Choose projects that are reasonably within the ability of the city to support and carry out. Unfulfilled promises can do lasting damage to a city’s youth participation efforts.
  - Define roles and responsibilities. Be clear about the role of the young people, mutual expectations and the scope and limits of their authority.
Put resources behind the efforts. Staffing, funding, and time with elected officials are just some of the resources that may be needed.

**Recommendation 3**
Establish a thorough, informative Parks and Recreation website.

The following items should be incorporated in future website improvements for the city:
- Incorporate a weekly updated scheduling/standings series of pages for all ongoing sporting seasons.
- A centralized page should contain links or Adobe Reader-compatible forms for many of the functions of the Parks and Recreation Department, such as facility rental forms, sports registration forms, protest request forms and procedures, etc.
- Develop a Parks and Recreation calendar, featuring up to three months of data, finalized with up to a month’s worth of data.
- Incorporate a comprehensive search engine that is user-friendly and Meridian site-specific.
- Establish an interactive city map showing city parks, which can be clicked to provide vital statistics of the park (available facilities and parking) and current status (under renovation, ready for use, in use, etc).
- Provide hyperlinks and/or contact information for city and county related sports clubs, Boys & Girls club, local swimming pool, Water Park and other similar activities.

**Recommendation 4**
It is mandatory that the Parks Department seek grant funds for all aspects of park land purchase and development of existing parks.
- Contract with or hire a grant writer to research and apply for grant opportunities.

**Recommendation 5**
General Recommendations

While these recommendations do not specifically fall within the benchmarks of our report, these issues are important within this department and require additional actions.
- **Job Descriptions of Parks and Recreation Employees:** We recommend writing and establishing clear, concise objectives and job descriptions for all Meridian Parks and Recreation Employees. The goal for this recommendation should be 90 days or less.
- **Youth Representation at State Convention:** We recommend sponsoring up to four (4) youth representatives to attend the upcoming Association of Idaho Cities convention to be held in Garden City Red Lion in June of 2004. This will help in providing our city with youth representation as well as lay some of the groundwork for the establishment of the future Youth Council.
- **Branding / Code of Ethics:** As the city enters into partnerships with several local entities, provide leadership, direction, and communication directly dealing with Meridian's vision of a family based community. This should include but is not limited to a Code of Ethics, positive reinforcement, and sportsmanship for all levels involved in the activity. It is recommended that these values be relayed to the partners by members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Directors, and the Mayor of Meridian. This committee would love to see the "bar of standards" of spectators, participants, and officials raised, which will carry a lasting image with surrounding communities and visitors to our city. Zero dissent should be a strict rule of conduct.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine the city’s planning and zoning system, comparing it with systems of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Interview Meridian residents, business owners, developers, neighborhood associations and building professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s planning & zoning approval efforts with those of other similarly-sized cities in the. Note strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Investigate ways in which the city's planning and zoning process can be streamlined. Recommend ways in which feedback can be obtained by those applying for any planning or zoning action on an ongoing basis.
- Investigate and recommend ways in which the planning and zoning process can be integrated with the City of Meridian website to enhance customer service.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements which will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

Issues Assessment

The Planning and Zoning Department is one of the most vital and important departments in the City of Meridian. The Planning and Zoning Department will in large part determine both the short term and long term success or failure of the City of Meridian.

For a number of reasons, the City of Meridian is poised to become the premiere city in the State of Idaho. Meridian, if governed properly, has the potential to become the business center of the Treasure Valley with exceptional quality of life for its residents. The Planning and Zoning Department will be a key factor in the City of Meridian reaching its potential as a city.

The biggest challenge facing the City of Meridian and the Planning and Zoning Department is growth. Growth will come in many forms and varieties and will challenge the City of Meridian, its officials, staff and residents. The City of Meridian and the Planning and Zoning Department must establish and develop an attitude which encourages, welcomes and embraces growth and the accompanying challenges.

The Planning and Zoning Department is functioning at a higher level than ever before. The hiring of Anna Powell as the zoning administrator has impacted the department positively. It is clear that Ms. Powell is committed to improving the department and its performance.

Another reason for the improvements in the Planning and Zoning Department is the Meridian Customer Interview Survey, conducted by Dawneen Blakesly of Blakesly and Associates. Ms. Blakesly conducted extensive interviews with professionals and citizens in the community to assess the performance of the elected officials and staff of the City of Meridian. The initial assessment and the subsequent follow-up interviews and report, which were recently presented to the Mayor and City Council, have provided an accurate assessment of performance along with concrete recommendations for improvements.
II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: Continuous Improvement
A mechanism should be in place where ongoing, positive and meaningful improvement to the processes and functions of the City of Meridian is provided.

Benchmark 2: Update and Improve the Zoning Ordinance
Zoning Ordinances should be up-to-date, effectively address the needs of a rapidly growing city and provide staff with the necessary tools for the efficient processing of applications and permits.

Benchmark 3: Harmonious relationships between the Planning and Zoning staff, Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council.
In many municipalities, the Planning and Zoning Commission exercises authority, functions effectively and takes considerable weight off the City Council. Confidence is reciprocated between the Planning and Zoning Commission, Planning and Zoning staff and the City Council.

Benchmark 4: Process Efficiency
Planning and Zoning process should not take too long and should not be bogged down by policies, practices and procedures which do not add value or benefit to the city or the applicant.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

The most notable improvement in the Planning and Zoning Department is the attitude of the staff. From the moment a person is greeted at the counter by Kristy Vigil or any of the other staff members, there is a welcoming attitude and a willingness to provide positive service.

Some other noteworthy improvements are:
• More timely staff reports
• Better use of the electronic mail for distributing documents
• Positive approach to conflict
• Timely returned telephone calls and emails
• Better preparation and communication prior to hearing dates
• Better notification of hearing dates

Many positive improvements have been made in the Planning and Zoning Department. The present and former Mayor, City Council members and staff should be commended for their efforts.

Benchmark 1: Continuous Improvement
Due to the growth of the City of Meridian and the increasing workloads of the Mayor, City Council and Staff, there is no ongoing, proactive vehicle for the improvement of city processes and functions.

Benchmark 2: Updated Zoning Ordinances
The current zoning ordinance is outdated and does not effectively address the needs of a rapidly growing city and does not provide staff with the necessary tools for the efficient processing of applications and permits.
Benchmark 3: Harmonious relationships between the Planning and Zoning staff, Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council.
The Planning and Zoning Commission lacks authority, does not function effectively and does not take any weight off the City Council. It appears that there may be some lack of confidence in the Planning and Zoning Commission on the part of the Staff and City Council.

Benchmark 4: Process Efficiency
The planning and zoning process takes too long and is unnecessarily bogged down by policies, practices and procedures which do not add value or benefit to the City or the applicant.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

As in any organization there is always a need for improvement. If there is one underlying theme to all of the interviews conducted by this subcommittee it is, “Speed Up the Process.”

“Speed Up the Process” should be the mantra of every City of Meridian elected official and employee with respect to the city’s planning and zoning process.

Recommendation 1
Create a Process Review Committee.

This committee would provide ongoing, positive and meaningful improvement to the processes and functions of the City of Meridian.

The Process Review Committee would consist of staff members from Planning and Zoning, Public Works and possibly the City Clerk’s Office, as well as private citizens and either the Mayor or a member of the City Council. A Chairperson would be selected by the appointed group. The size of the group should have no more than 8-10 members who are appointed by the Mayor and City Council to staggered terms. The committee should meet once a month for at least the first six months and then quarterly thereafter. There would be no real cost other than the time of the committee members, some staff time and a room in which to meet. Ultimately, staff time will be saved as efficiencies are introduced.

Recommendation 2
Update and improve the Zoning Ordinance.

Update the Zoning Ordinance to address current conditions and provide for more efficient and timely processing of applications. The ordinance should be adopted by the City Council and in place no later than January 1, 2005. The cost will be the time of the Zoning Administrator and staff. In addition there is the direct cost of a consultant (Diane Kushlan) to assist in the updating. Note: Anna Powell has hired a consultant (Diane Kushlan) and is moving ahead with an update or rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance.

Recommendation 3
Improve the effectiveness, working relationship and trust among planning staff and City Council toward the Planning and Zoning Commission and its members, and visa versa.

Train and trust the Planning and Zoning Commission to effectively administer certain aspects of the city ordinances in order to improve efficiencies and speed the application
process. Authorizing the Planning and Zoning Commission to be the approving body of certain types of applications will lighten the load of the Mayor and City Council and speed the processing of applications. The updating of the Zoning ordinance will provide more authority to the Planning and Zoning Commission, but it is incumbent on the Mayor, City Council and Planning and Zoning staff to acknowledge the Planning and Zoning Commission as a capable body which is an important and necessary component of the process.

**Recommendation 4**

Speed up the Process.

Streamline the process to provide for faster approvals without compromise to the end result. Interviews with staff and the public produced the following suggestions (this list is not intended to be comprehensive in nature, but rather a sampling of comments and suggestions received during our interviews):

- Provide staff with authority to approve certain applications such as lot line adjustments, simple lot splits, etc., without requiring Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council approval.
- Provide the Planning and Zoning Commission with authority to approve certain applications, such as CUPs, without the requirement of obtaining approval from the City Council.
- Remove the City Clerk’s Office from the application process. Currently all applications to the Planning and Zoning Department are submitted to the City Clerk’s Office and then distributed to the various departments. Applications should be submitted directly to the Planning and Zoning Department, which would then distribute and manage the process.
- Remove City Clerk’s Office from public noticing and publishing obligations. The staff currently providing these functions (Tara and Jessica) should be moved from the Clerk’s Office to the Planning and Zoning offices and work under the supervision of the Zoning Administrator.
- The Consent Agenda should be used more effectively by the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The scope of the items placed on the Consent Agenda should be increased substantially. The length of meetings will be decreased dramatically which will ease the burden on all those who participate.
- Early release of draft staff reports in an effort to resolve conflicts between staff and applicant and opposing parties prior to the public hearings.
- Add Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law to the Staff Report.
- Staff Reports provided to applicant one week prior to hearing date.
- Do not institute a Design Review requirement.
- Tabling or deferring applications or decisions by the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council and the Planning staff should be an action of last resort and should occur only on rare occasions or at the request of the applicant.
- Special attention should be given to the Public Works Department Staff Reports or reviews which historically hold up the process. All Staff Reports flow from or through one staff member which must be changed. The Planning and Zoning Department has been working with the Public Works Department so that the Public Works Department is no longer a co-author of the Staff Reports, but rather a commenting agency.
- Applicants must be required to submit complete packages. If the Planning and Zoning staff is expected to respond quickly and efficiently, partial or incomplete applications cannot be accepted or conditionally accepted.
I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine the city's law enforcement services. To interview the command and line staff of each entity, noting strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements.
- Investigate ways that crimes and crime trends occurring in the Meridian area can better be tracked and that information provided to the Mayor and City Council.
- Recommend methods of reporting police statistics via the city website.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress and/or challenges.

City Governance

Vision: The department will strive to adapt to an increasingly diverse and fast-growing community through collaborative planning and individual professional development. Strong emphasis will be placed on promoting partnerships with the community and other public service agencies; encouraging a commitment to individual professional development, stressing education, training, and ethical standards; continuous review of the needs and concerns within the community and department; and proactive interaction through planned activities and programs directed at enhancing public safety, crime prevention and risk reduction.

Mission: To provide the highest quality service in partnership with the community to preserve and protect life and property through education, prevention and enforcement.

Staff size: 50 sworn officers + 6 authorized to be hired, 12 civilian + 1 authorized, 3 part-time (on call).

Current year Annual Budget: $5,987,436.00

Major challenge areas:

Primary challenge revolves around growth. Specifically, an increase in all crimes, traffic congestion and traffic accidents cause increased demands on police services. Ratio of officers per 1,000 population creates staffing problems for needed services (i.e. traffic.)

With a 39% increase in calls in January 2004 over January 2003, guidance is needed to determine which calls should be delegated to sworn officers and which could be handled by civilian staff or volunteers. Other issues include: vehicle replacement, planning, communications, crime reporting, and performance evaluation system.

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmarks in this section of the report are taken from a variety of police departments in the region. This section also makes use of Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS, 2000), compiled from municipal police agencies across the country by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.
Public Safety unit team members were unable to find an “optimal” police agency. Instead, specific benchmarks noted below highlight the fact that some police departments do some things very well (e.g., well established volunteer programs, high officer to resident ratio, comprehensive community policing plans, etc…), but these very same departments are lacking in other areas. Therefore, we offer the following benchmarks with the caveat that it is rather unrealistic that any one department would excel in all areas.

Benchmark 1
The average ratio of full-time officers per 1,000 residents from the 2000 LEMAS Survey is 2.6 per 1,000. The average for cities with populations between 25,000 and 49,999 is 1.8.

Many of the nation’s largest cities boast high officer to resident ratios, including New York (5.0), Chicago (4.7), Philadelphia (4.6), and Boston (3.7). The average officer to resident ratio for departments serving populations of 1,000 to 24,999 is 2.25. The Boise Police Department has an officer to citizen ratio of 1.3. Twin Falls, ID has a ratio of 1.63.

Benchmark 2
Police departments that truly wish to implement a philosophy of community policing and problem-solving engage employees at all levels of the organization, other service providers, and other external stakeholders in planning for change. Ninety percent of local police officers work for a department with some type of community policing plan (LEMAS, 2000).

While often an arduous task, planning for change in law enforcement is a critical first step to change, especially toward a change to community policing. Departments that have effectively implemented community policing involved internal and external stakeholders in the planning process in an effort to gather input from all parties concerned. This is the approach taken by several departments noted for their community policing accomplishments, including the Madison (WI) Police Department and the Hayward (CA) Police Department.

Benchmark 3
Cooperative agreements and inter-agency collaboration in law enforcement is increasing in an era where crime problems and their related effects are considered regional in nature.

According to the findings from the LEMAS survey (2000), about two-thirds of all local police officers worked for a department that assigned officers to a multi-agency task force. Relatedly, 65 percent of agencies serving populations between 25,000 and 49,999 participated in a multi-agency task force.

Benchmark 4
Coordinated volunteer programs can enhance the level of service a police department can provide, and can also save the city money.

The trend in law enforcement today is to use community volunteers to perform tasks that would otherwise be conducted by paid employees. Typically, volunteers undergo rigorous background checks, but do not engage in tasks that are "sensitive" in nature.

The Boise Police Department is one such agency with a coordinated volunteer program. In fact, in 2003, 140 volunteers worked 15,000 hours at a value of $193,000 to the City
The BPD uses a full-time volunteer coordinator, who supervises the program, conducts background checks, and assigns volunteers to specific tasks. Volunteer tasks at the BPD include support services for civilian staff, pawn detail, volunteers on call, abandoned vehicle patrol, substation staffing, report taking at substations, and transportation of police vehicles for maintenance.

**Benchmark 5**
The level of service that police departments can provide is enhanced through effective and efficient means for police officers to contact the public, including contact with crime victims and witnesses to crimes.

Law enforcement agencies in this region, including the Boise Police Department, along with agencies throughout the country, assign officers cell phones for use for police business, typically for follow-up calls to crime victims or witnesses. Other departments engage in a cost sharing agreement between officers and the city for use of personal cell phones used for official business.

**Benchmark 6**
Progressive law enforcement agencies are using non-traditional means for crime reporting and report taking.

The main goal with any non-traditional strategy for crime reporting and report taking is to maintain or increase citizen satisfaction with police services, and free up officer time for community partnership building and problem-solving.

The Wilmington (Delaware) Police Department’s management-of-demand system, which utilized alternative response strategies, including a telephone reporting system for some property crimes, resulted in the freeing up of patrol resources to perform other functions. In addition, residents continued to be satisfied with the department and crime did not increase. Other departments have experimented with a mail-in reporting forms, and web-based reporting for some crimes.

**Benchmark 7**
Crime prevention education and information should be readily available to the public.

The importance of crime prevention in its various forms, including community crime prevention, individualized crime prevention strategies, and crime prevention through environmental design, has been well noted in police literature. Over the long run, crime prevention strategies can result in fewer calls for police service, and empower community residents to engage in basic activities to protect themselves and their property. Often, police departments hire crime prevention specialists as full-time, paid employees in an effort to coordinate such activities.

The Spokane Police Department offers extensive information on crime prevention through its website, and makes this information available to the public with hard-copy reprints.

**Benchmark 8**
As a progressive management strategy and to improve employee satisfaction and motivation, internal rewards and recognition should be given to employees whose behavior exceeds department goals and expectations.

Generally framed under the rubric of Total Quality Management, this leadership approach attempts to focus on the 95 percent of employees who tend to do well in the
organization, and reward them appropriately. The Madison (WI) Police Department implemented its “Principles of Quality Leadership in Madison.” Among these principles were the ideas that teamwork should be fostered, creativity and risk-taking should be encouraged, and recognition of accomplishments should be undertaken.

**Benchmark 9**
Meaningful performance evaluation systems motivate employees to achieve the mission of the police organization.

Many law enforcement agencies today struggle with the balance of traditional police activities and problem-solving initiatives in performance evaluation instruments for line-level employees. But the fact of the matter is that police employees know what items are covered in performance evaluations and naturally want to do well for items that are covered on the instrument. Therefore, it is important to have a performance evaluation that consists of activities that encompass the overall mission of the law enforcement agency.

The Ada County Sheriff’s Office recently undertook a revision of their performance evaluation instrument, which now includes traditional deputy functions, as well as problem-solving and community policing activities which are important in an effort to foster the mission of the agency.

### III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

**Benchmark 1: Ratio of Officers to Residents**
As previously stated in this report, the average ratio of full-time officers per 1,000 residents from a national sample of police departments is 2.6. The average for cities with populations between 25,000 and 49,999 is 1.8.

In the City of Meridian, the projected population for 2004 is 44,084. With a sworn staff authorized at 56 (50 of whom are currently employed), the current officer to resident ratio in the city is 1.27—but only once the 6 authorized positions have been hired and trained.

This ratio is far below the national average, and is below the average for cities with populations between 25,000 and 49,999 residents. What this means is that the Meridian Police Department frequently has stacked calls and little in the way of down time to engage the community in proactive problem-solving, an approach to policing that the department administration and line level officers would like to adopt. In a recent analysis of non-committed time undertaken by department administration, it was found that Meridian police officers have approximately 1.5 hours of uncommitted time for every 10 hours on duty. Simply put, officers have very little time to do anything but react to calls for service. The overall level of service that can be provided to the citizens of Meridian is greatly compromised by the unusually low officer to citizen ratio.

**Benchmark 2: Community Policing Planning**
This benchmark delineates the need for extensive planning in preparation for the implementation of community policing and problem-solving. Plans typically include the nature of change, and how this will be achieved both internally and externally. In terms of internal change, plans include proposed changes in the hiring of officers, performance evaluation, training, deployment strategies, problem-solving initiatives, and community partnerships. Planning for external change typically involves strategies for fostering stakeholder involvement in working with the police to improve neighborhood quality of life.
Presently, the MPD falls short on this benchmark. Community policing and problem-solving are tangentially addressed in recent strategic plans, but only in terms of future planning. The MPD appears ready to embark on such a change, but is continually challenged by high call volume. As such, anything that resembles community policing, at the present, is sporadic and done “as time permits.”

**Benchmark 3: Cooperative Agreements/Interagency Task Forces**

While many law enforcement agencies traditionally have operated autonomously, the trend in policing today is to work with other police departments and all levels of government on specific regional issues, as well as to enter into formal cooperative agreements regarding mutual aid. This trend is approaching the level of a norm today.

The MPD excels with regard to this benchmark. It is a key agency in the Critical Incident Task Force (CITF) for the region, and recently completed the investigation on the McAbee case. The MPD was the lead agency in this regard. The depth of this investigation resulted in other agreements among agencies involved in the CITF with regard to cost sharing. Both MPD administrators and line-level employees report outstanding working relationships with the Ada County Sheriff’s Office, Boise Police Department, Garden City Police Department, and the Idaho State Police. Mutual aid agreements also have been signed. In addition, the MPD administration reported that the MPD recently worked with the FBI and the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

In all, the MPD understands the nature of regional crime problems, and offers its support to surrounding agencies.

**Benchmark 4: Coordinated Volunteer Programs**

At present, the MPD does not have a coordinated volunteer program to supplement its paid employees, both civilian and sworn. A volunteer program, along with an expansion of the reserve program and the internship program can relieve some of the burden placed on paid employees.

Departments that have been most successful with volunteer programs have hired volunteer coordinators and have assigned coordinators tasks that are similar to those from the Boise Police Department. Once volunteers are recruited and trained, they can serve a variety of functions. For example, according to MPD administration, a sergeant currently shuttles vehicles for maintenance. This function can be assigned to a volunteer, freeing up a sworn officer’s time for other duties.

**Benchmark 5: Efficient Communication Between the Police and Public**

Communication between the police and public is vital. This communication can occur in a number of ways: by talking with citizens after a reactive call for service, through proactive police work, through police participation in neighborhood groups, through special presentations, etc… Here, our focus is on police-citizen communication in the sense of timely follow-up after having received a call for service, and any other needed communication between the police and public that would normally be handled via the telephone.

In a nutshell, officers at the MPD have no easy way to communicate with the public in this regard. An officer who may need to contact a citizen, with the current system, would need to drive back to the police station to make the call, then go back out on the streets. Suffice it to say, this is very inefficient, and needlessly takes officers away from their patrol function. In addition, the current system causes delays in communicating with
citizens, especially when viewed in light of the high call volume that the MPD currently is experiencing.

At the MPD, sergeants, detectives, and command staff have cell phones for business use. Line-level officers do not.

**Benchmark 6: Non-Traditional Means for Crime Reporting/Report Taking**

Law enforcement agencies across the country are experimenting with non-traditional ways for citizens to report crimes. These rather innovative means include web based reporting, telephone call-in reporting, mail reporting, and others.

Currently, the MPD utilizes a traditional system for crime reporting. For each call where an offense is reported, a sworn officer is dispatched. This practice, however, results in a ripple effect. Sworn officers take all crime reports, when warranted, even for very minor crimes, such as property offenses, including theft and vandalism. Calls frequently stack for these offenses, which continually put officers in a reactive mode. This, combined with the fact that current resources dictate that only 3 officers work a given shift at minimum staffing, results in little or no time for proactive community contacts, problem-solving or community policing initiatives.

**Benchmark 7: Crime Prevention Education and Information**

Crime prevention efforts as a priority in law enforcement have many benefits, including the potential for improving individual and neighborhood quality of life, and decreasing the number of calls for police service.

In some ways, the MPD falls short with regard to this benchmark, and in other ways it also is meeting the standard. In terms of the amount and type of crime prevention information available on the website, much more could be done. Citizens are generally willing to take reasonable steps to protect themselves, their families, and their property, but oftentimes rely on the police to provide this information. Comparatively little information is offered on the MPD website in relation to other departments, such as the Spokane Police Department, which offers information on individualized crime prevention, community crime prevention, and crime prevention through environmental design.

On the other hand, the MPD recently received authorization to hire a half-time crime prevention specialist. This has turned into a full-time position due to external funding that was applied for and received. We commend Chief Musser for applying for this and other grants as non-traditional ways to secure needed positions at the police department. Once the crime prevention specialist is hired, he/she will be a useful resource to citizens and officers alike. Most likely, part of the crime prevention specialist role will be to offer more resources via the web and printed material, and to offer other crime prevention services in the form of presentations to community groups. The effects of such practices are potentially dramatic and long-lasting.

**Benchmark 8: Progressive Leadership/Internal Rewards and Recognition**

Progressive concepts in police management stress the need for administrators to allow innovation and risk taking by line-level personnel, for administrators to be open to input from all levels of the organization, and to reward behavior consistent with the mission of the organization, rather than to simply focus on those who do not.

The MPD, under the leadership of Chief Bill Musser, has made great strides in this area. Despite being extraordinarily busy on any given shift, officers are happy, see eye-to-eye with administrators on many issues, and believe that they are given the authority to take risks and innovate, and generally enjoy a good relationship with management. Quite
frankly, the above points are rather rare these days in law enforcement, and the MPD should be commended for this. The positive work environment likely is seen when officers interact with citizens.

In addition, the chief has implemented a formal and informal system of rewards and praise, which recognizes performance that exceeds departmental expectations.

**Benchmark 9: Performance Evaluation Systems**

Well thought-out and implemented performance evaluation systems are critical to the success of a police organization. Performance evaluations have the indirect effect of relaying to employees “what’s important” in their job functions.

By all accounts from line-level officers, sergeants, and detectives at the MPD, the current performance appraisal system is too long, redundant, and does not cover all of the specific job functions for a police officer at the MPD. The current system of performance evaluation, undertaken by sergeants for line-level employees, has numerous limitations, including the fact that officers are rotated through different sergeants every four months. Officers themselves feel that the current system of “self evaluation” needs to be changed.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1**

Continue to monitor city growth and plan for additional patrol officer positions to reach acceptable staffing levels. Optimally, the benchmark should be the national average from the 2000 LEMAS Survey of 2.6 full-time officers per 1,000 residents. Alternatively, the city may want to begin by using the benchmark for cities with populations between 25,000 and 49,999, which is 1.8 officers per 1,000 residents.

As noted above, the city of Meridian falls short with regard to both benchmarks. The current officer to citizen ratio is 1.2, once all authorized positions are hired and on patrol. The officer to citizen ratio, if staffing levels simply are maintained, will worsen, as the city is projected to grow by 6 percent each year for the near future. The impact of this recommendation is dramatic and costly. The city and the police department should work together to put a plan in place. Simply put, as the city continues to grow, the police department must also grow. Both Boise and Twin Falls have higher officer to citizen ratios.

**Recommendation 2**

Develop a customer-service and community policing plan promoting the mission and values of the department.

The MPD continues to make great strides in providing quality customer service to those in Meridian. These efforts are hampered in a number of ways, however, because of call volume. Sworn staff at all ranks as well as civilian employees, and external stakeholders should engage in facilitated discussions regarding how best those in Meridian can be served by the police department given existing constraints. Regular in-service training in community policing, problem-solving, and customer service should be included in this plan. Currently, community policing activities are sporadic, and good work is being done, but on an “as time permits” basis.
These facilitated discussions can occur with an external (hired) facilitator, or in-house. Currently, administrators are going through leadership development training and find themselves in a good position to do the facilitation on their own.

**Recommendation 3**

Expand the use of citizen volunteers at the Meridian Police Department. The hiring of a volunteer coordinator would facilitate this effort.

As acknowledged in the MPD 2003-2004 Strategic Plan, non-traditional staffing can take the place of sworn personnel to accomplish non-enforcement tasks. The plan calls for an examination of non-sworn staff to achieve these functions, but the MPD should explore the use of citizen volunteers for these functions as well. Expanding intern and reserve programs also can supplement sworn officers for some functions.

The Boise Police Department has put a plan into place that it is willing to share. Contact: Glenna Crawford at 373-5487. Costs to the city of Meridian: one paid employee (possibly part-time) and in-house training time.

**Recommendation 4**

All patrol officers should have cell-phones.

This can be accomplished a number of ways. Cell phones could be purchased for the 25 patrol officers and the six additional authorized positions with local coverage only. Alternatively, the department could explore the possibility of a cell-phone allowance for personal cell phones used for work-related purposes. Implementing a cell-phone program will enhance police-citizen communication and well as add to the general efficiency of patrol officers, who must drive back to the station to make routine telephone calls.

Cost estimates for cell-phones and local coverage plans can be obtained through a variety of cell phone services. The Boise Police Department uses Cricket.

**Recommendation 5**

Explore the utility of crime reporting through the Meridian Police Department website or some other non-traditional means, especially for the more prevalent crimes reported in the City: theft, vandalism, and burglary. Partner with fire services to facilitate report writing when traditional methods of taking reports are used.

As the MPD 2003-2004 Strategic Plan attests, and as confirmed through interviews with command staff and line personnel, over two-third’s of Meridian’s reported offenses involve property crimes. These types of offenses are the primary type to which patrol officers respond daily for reports and initial investigations. As the numbers of these types of offenses have increased over time, they have produced a case backlog, placing additional demands on patrol and investigative resources. This has reduced the time spent on each case, which has the corollary impact of reducing the potential for case solvability and property recovery.

Traditional ways of reporting crimes, of course, should remain that way if there exists some overriding reason to do so, especially for more serious crimes. Here, the MPD should continue working with Meridian Fire for report writing at its various substations—both those currently operational and those that are planned for future construction.

**Recommendation 6**
Make use of the Department’s website and crime prevention specialist position for needed crime prevention information.

While providing information is only one part of an overall strategy to prevent some crimes from occurring, it is a feasible start. Command staff and line-level officers acknowledge that property crime offenses are the most preventable of the crimes reported to the department. Expanding the use of the MPD website for crime prevention educationally utilizing the crime prevention position, along with line-level officers engaging in problem-solving will continue to enhance the department’s ability to make an impact on crime prevention.

The MPD is well on its way in this regard. The MPD 2003-2004 Strategic Plan acknowledges the vital functions of the crime prevention specialist, including “conducting residential and commercial building surveys, preparing recommendations to make the structure more crime resistant, and educating the public in other means of securing property. Officers will also be trained in crime prevention techniques and problem solving.”

For ideas on crime prevention web content, see the Spokane Police Department Website at http://www.spokanepolice.org.

**Recommendation 7**
Continue a system of internal awards and recognition, but change the procedure for recognizing these achievements.

MPD command staff is to be commended for instituting a system of internal awards and recognition. First-line supervisors, middle-management and command staff are encouraged to continue to recognize and reward behavior that is consistent with the mission of the MPD. We recommend that managers be continually cognizant of the fact that line-level employees look forward to and appreciate feedback from their supervisors, even if this simply means a quick e-mail.

In terms of formal awards and recognition, we recommend that command staff determine award categories, and that employees at all levels of the organization choose recipients of these awards through a voting process. The award becomes most meaningful in this regard, and avoids potential “hurt feelings” directed toward command staff.

**Recommendation 8**
Identify important outcome measures that should be used in evaluating a police officer performance—one that captures both traditional policing activities and more contemporary notions of community policing and problem solving.

The City should work with the police department in developing meaningful performance evaluations that consist of items directly related to the mission of the Meridian Police Department. Community policing and problem solving—even at a time when this might add additional burdens—can be encouraged by adding items on the instrument under this general heading.

TRANSITION TEAM UNIT REPORT: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

• Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Meridian City volunteer boards and commissions. The plan is to investigate methods to enhance and expand community participation in the City of Meridian.
• Encourage public and community involvement in city government and to have an ongoing method of monitoring, measuring and evaluating a successful increase in public participation.
• Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the cities current citizen volunteer commissions, committees and Ad Hoc Groups.
• Look at ways to increase citizen participation in City Council meetings and interview other cities to determine ways to make City Council meetings more inviting to citizens.
• Examine ways of encouraging citizens not currently involved to become more involved on volunteer boards and commissions.
• Recognize those people willing to volunteer and let them know how valuable they are to the City of Meridian.

II. BENCHMARKS

Research shows that the City of Meridian has not established specific benchmarks to measure public involvement or participation. Measurement recommendations are included later in this report.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS / MEASUREMENT

Measurement of public involvement is accomplished by various means in other cities. From interviews conducted with leaders of a half-dozen Idaho cities of similar size, the following measurement tools have been effective:

• Questionnaires are utilized to measure support, participation and attitudes of citizens on a periodic basis. Some cities send out questionnaires every two years, while others schedule them every four or five years.
• Cities that have obtained membership in the International City / County Management Association (ICMA) say that they receive considerable assistance in all areas of city government, including programs and procedures to increase public participation. Information about the ICMA is available at www.icma.org.
• Attendance records at City Council Meetings and other city meetings are recorded and measured to evaluate citizen participation.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were derived from various sources, including interviews with citizens, Meridian City employees and with personnel from the cities of Burley, Eagle, Kuna, Nampa, Post Falls and Twin Falls.
Recommendation 1
Heighten participation in community boards and commissions.

- Improved methods of communication between volunteer boards or committees with city officials and staff is encouraged. There are instances where work completed by committees and commissions has not been adequately communicated with staff and city officials. Improvement in this area could prevent volunteers from feeling discouraged and unappreciated, impacting their willingness to volunteer in the future.
- A review of the following City of Meridian Commissions, Committees and Ad Hoc Groups indicates that vacated positions are not always filled on a timely basis:

1. Planning and Zoning Commission
2. Parks & Recreation Commission
3. Park Impact Fee Committee
4. Historical Preservation Commission
5. Traffic Safety Commission
6. SWACC Committee (ordinance)
7. Transportation Task Force Committee
8. Meridian Development Corporation (ordinance)
9. City of Meridian Advisory Committees
10. Equalization Board (ordinance)
11. Investment Committee (ordinance)
12. Employee Benefits Committee
13. IT Committee
14. Emergency Management Committee
15. Compass Representation
16. Treasure Valley Partnership (Mayor)
17. Valley Ride (Mayor)
18. Association of Idaho Cities (Mayor)
19. CICAC
20. ACHD Citizen Advisory Committee
21. Ada Technical Advisory Committee
22. Treasure Valley Transportation Demographic Subcommittee

We recommend that in order to have assistance in filling these vacancies, Recommendation 2 be enacted.

Recommendation 2
Centralize and enhance public involvement efforts.

- A Public Involvement Coordinator position is recommended to manage communications and procedures concerning public participation and involvement. This position would not necessarily have to be a new staff member. If the responsibility is assigned to a current staff member, the budget would not be negatively impacted.
- The Public Involvement Coordinator should create and maintain a database of contact names and addresses of the leadership for the following groups:
  1. Service clubs
  2. Sororities
  3. Homeowner’s associations
  4. Major employers
  5. Youth groups
6. Chamber of commerce
7. PTAs
8. PTOs
9. School district
10. School booster groups
11. Churches
12. Faith-based groups
13. Media (including radio stations, television stations and newspapers)

These groups should be contacted frequently to encourage their members and associates to participate in city government and to pass along information on vacant positions for volunteer boards and committees. The communication between the Public Involvement Coordinator and these groups is essential to encourage and increase volunteer participation.

Recommendation 3
Heighten outreach to community groups.

- Mayor De Weerd is beginning to implement favorable programs that increase youth participation. Several of the interviewed cities have initiated youth (or teen) councils. We feel this is a good way to involve groups of people that may not normally be involved.
- Council members and Mayor De Weerd are to be commended for their accessibility and attendance at service clubs, Chamber of Commerce, community meetings and events. Each city staff member should be assigned to a service club or community activity. This includes law enforcement officers who should especially participate with meetings and activities of homeowners associations.
- An attitude that the public isn’t permitted to speak at City Council meetings was detected from several citizens who were interviewed. To increase participation at City Council meetings, a period of five minutes could be available following roll call for public comment. One Treasure Valley city that provides five to ten minutes for citizen comment feels having the time available for the public has helped dispel the attitude that no one is allowed to speak. However, very few citizens utilize the public comment period.
- Continue having church representatives open City Council meetings with an invocation and having scout units or other community groups lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Periodically schedule meetings away from City Hall. Suggestions have been made for occasional meetings at fire houses, golf course club houses, churches, schools, neighborhoods, etc.
- Schedule the Mayor and Council members for public appearances and speaking engagements at various community group meetings and special occasions as frequently as possible.

Recommendation 4
Ensure public involvement opportunities are well-publicized.

- Improved communication is needed to encourage citizen involvement on volunteer commissions and committees, and to make certain that the public is aware their valuable assistance is wanted, needed and very much appreciated.
- Add a user-friendly section to the website to specifically encourage public and citizen involvement. This area should provide an easy method to communicate with city officials and staff. A listing of all volunteer positions and a volunteer application form for boards, commissions and committees should be available. Ideally, this application should be designed for submission electronically directly through the
website, in addition to the capability of printing it. Some of the interviewed cities are publishing their Planning and Zoning and City Council agendas and minutes from these meetings on their web pages. This would enable citizens to be involved and know what is going on, even if they are unable to attend those meetings.

**Recommendation 5**
Continue working in a partnership with the media.
- Usage of local newspapers is encouraged to increase public participation. Compliments to the media for the many favorable news stories about Meridian that have been reported this year. Both the Valley Times and the Idaho Statesman have expressed their desire to do what they can to continue with this effort.
- Enhance use of other channels of communications with the public through newsletters, radio, television, community bulletin boards, sewer and water bill inserts, etc. The Mayor might consider a regularly-scheduled discussion period on the radio each week.
- Communicate public involvement opportunities and activities of the city by utilizing available Community TV opportunities from broadcast and cable television services. The possibilities should be explored with TVTV and Cable One. One of the interviewed cities televises two City Council Meetings each month. Charter School of Technology students could possibly assist with the televising of City Council or other city meetings. This would also enable the city to also increase youth involvement.

**Recommendation 6**
Heighten participation on regional boards and commissions, and other organizations which could further the city’s mission.
- Membership in the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is recommended. Budget impact would be approximately five hundred dollars annually. As previously mentioned, other cities receive considerable assistance in all areas of city government, including programs, surveys and procedures to increase public participation. Information about ICMA is available at www.icma.org.
I. OVERVIEW

Although the City of Meridian Building Department is considered a division of the Meridian Public Works Department, for the purposes of this report, the Public Works Department shall be deemed to include the following three (3) separate departments: the Wastewater Treatment Division; the Water Division; and the Engineering Division.

Objectives

- Examine the city’s water, sewer, and public works systems, comparing them with systems of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Interview Meridian residents, business owners, and public works professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s public works efforts with those of other similarly sized cities in the Northwest. Note strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Investigate ways in which city residents could better interface with the city’s water, sewer, and public works systems via the city’s internet website (including bill paying and problem reporting), and how such a course of action would or would not be beneficial to the city and its residents.
- Recommend appropriate performance measures which will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

Issues Assessment

As a result of the current explosive rate of growth in the City of Meridian (population increase from less than 10,000 to 44,000 within the past 10 years), and based upon future population projections (increases to approximately 70,000 residents by 2014), the ability of the Public Works Department to continue to provide adequate potable water and wastewater treatment and disposal services is crucial to enable economic development to continue at present levels within the corporate limits of the City of Meridian.

City Governance

Overall Public Works Vision: “The coming decade will bring continued growth to Meridian, creating stronger demand for public works facilities, greater expectations for expanded services, intense focus on environmental quality standards, more complex compliance, and continued escalation of both costs and demand for readily accessible data. The department will meet future challenges by investing in more capable computing systems, focusing on professional development and training, updating antiquated ordinances, and utilizing local technical consultants to assist department staff. These and other efforts will result in a well-prepared city that has modern, reliable water and sewer systems, an emphasis on environmental quality, and accessible, responsive, and cost-effective public services.”

Wastewater Division Vision: “In the next several years, population and industrial growth will at least double demand on the current wastewater system, requiring increased capacity, greater power usage, more stringent testing, more maintenance, more comprehensive testing and analysis, and more internal R & D to keep pace. EPA and DEQ regulations will grow more demanding, with little or no latitude other
than compliance. To keep pace, the department predicts the need for more facilities, additional staff, more complex equipment, additional training, and certification of laboratory facilities if the City is to maintain its exceptional quality of life.

Water Division Vision: “Over the next decade Meridian’s growth will continue to bring added service demands, greater public scrutiny, escalating pollution risks, and a constantly increasing workload. The department will also be challenged by more stringent regulations mandated by state and federal authorities. We will strive to meet anticipated demand by adding necessary staff and facilities, seeking required operator certification, investing in training and overall staff development, and investing in technology and new procedures to provide greater efficiency and program effectiveness. The department will provide the Meridian community with a safe and ample water supply that will accommodate growth while promoting an exceptional quality of life.”

Overall Public Works Mission: “The department’s mission is to plan, construct, and maintain safe, attractive, and functional public works facilities in a manner that contributes to community prosperity and the quality of life of all citizens. Services include civil engineering, building permitting, and inspection, development plan review, sewer line inspection, project application analysis, water/sewer/capital improvement planning, archiving, and mapping, along with consultation to the development community and the general public.”

Wastewater Division Mission: “The Wastewater Department exists to provide reliable, continuous, safe, and economical sewer service to its customers. It is dedicated to the collection, transmission, treatment, and disposal of the wastewaters generated within the City of Meridian in order to protect public health, downstream water users, and the environment as defined by federal, state, and municipal statutes.”

Water Division Mission: “The department’s mission is to provide clean, safe water in ample quantities, while striving to provide quality customer service and meet or exceeding DEQ and EPA standards. Services include but are not limited to maintenance and customer relations in the areas of water quality, well monitoring, cross connection control, utility billing services, meter installation & reading, leak checks, water line inspection and line location.”

Overall Public Works Operating Philosophy: “The Public Works Department is a progressive, highly productive professional team dedicated to providing customer service in a manner that is courteous, prompt, and thorough. We believe in our community and embrace the responsibility to serve and protect the public trust, while performing to our very high standards of fiscal accountability, personal integrity, honesty, and fairness.”

Wastewater Division Operating Philosophy: “The Wastewater Department prides itself in being a highly dedicated, knowledgeable, and talented team known for its honesty and flexibility. Above all we are open, collaborative, and responsive, with great respect for the community and a total commitment to serving the public in a manner that preserves personal health and environmental quality.”

Water Division Operating Philosophy: “The department is a knowledgeable team of motivated, caring professionals dedicated to quality customer service throughout our community. As a group, we are honest, cooperative, and tenacious, always
prepared to offer assistance in a manner that reflects our high integrity, capability and commitment to serve the public trust.”

Staff size: The Meridian Public Works Department is currently staffed by fifty-nine (59) employees:
- Engineering Division: Fifteen (15) full time employees, including the Public Works Director.
- Wastewater Division: Twenty seven (27) full time employees, including the Superintendent, and one (1) part time employee.
- Water Division: Sixteen (16) full time employees, including the Water Superintendent.

Annual budget: The fiscal year 2004 budget for the Public Works Department was $23,131,141.

Major challenges:

- Providing and accurately locating an adequate potable water supply and waste water treatment facilities as the city continues to grow.
- Providing a balance between the area served by sewer and providing essential wastewater treatment capacity.
- Key City ordinances are out of date and do not properly relate to the City’s current status. These include ordinances dealing with sewer, water, and subdivision development, all have negative impact on community development, inter-agency relationships, and departmental effectiveness during a time of considerable growth.
- Another challenge associated with growth is the difficulty in predicting where growth will occur within the City. This makes planning more difficult, wastes resources, and makes informing developers and the general public of future growth areas difficult, all of which could be avoided by better, more predictable planning.
- Ever-increasing environmental requirements and regulations pertaining to potable water supply and wastewater treatment will require upgrade of existing systems and stress the City’s ability to fund the required facilities.
- Professional development will continue to be a “best case” use of budget dollars, allowing staff to become more knowledgeable, efficient, and effective as technology evolves, workload grows, and new services are requested.

II. BENCHMARKS

Water Division

Benchmark 1
Provide an adequate supply of clean, safe potable water.

High levels of commercial and residential growth within Meridian continue to place substantial additional demands on the city’s water distribution system. Without continued efforts to construct additional wells and water storage facilities, the city’s water distribution system simply will not be able to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate anticipated new development.

Benchmark 2
Meet or exceed Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for potable water.
Meeting the ever-increasing and more stringent regulations mandated by state and federal governments to ensure that the drinking water supply is clean and safe is a continuing challenge for all municipalities.

**Wastewater Division**

**Benchmark 3**
Provide adequate, reliable and economical wastewater treatment and disposal services.

The ability to continue to supply adequate wastewater services sufficient to serve projected future levels of commercial and residential growth will require continual expansion and upgrading of the city’s wastewater treatment and disposal facilities.

**Benchmark 4**
All wastewater treatment services are provided in compliance with federal, state and municipal ordinances to ensure the protection of public health and environment.

The EPA, DEQ and the Idaho State Legislature continue to tighten requirements that impact wastewater treatment and disposal. Compliance with these regulations is mandatory.

**Engineering Division**

**Benchmark 5**
Provide development plan review, project application analysis and inspection services with input from and consultation with the development community and the general public in a timely and customer-friendly manner.

As the primary point of contact between the Public Works Department and residents/contractors/developers, the ability of the Engineering Division to provide its services in a timely and customer-friendly manner is crucial to the public perception of the Public Works Department as a whole.

**Benchmark 6**
Planning for water and sewer capital improvements, and archiving and mapping of city facilities.

Planning for the location and construction of adequate water and wastewater facilities and infrastructure by the Engineering Division is crucial to the continued economic development of the City.

**III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)**

**Benchmark 1: Provide an adequate supply of clean, safe potable water.**
Although existing levels of commercial and residential growth have presented major challenges, the Water Division has managed to continually provide an adequate supply of potable water and sufficient water pressure to meet the city’s current fire protection needs. This has been accomplished through appropriate long-range planning and the processing of additional wells earlier than would have typically been required in the past.

The ability to continually locate and construct additional wells and water storage facilities is crucial to meet future growth. However, increased regulation and challenges by other
local water companies/competing water users to new wells are creating delays and present challenges.

Benchmark 2: Meet or exceed DEQ and EPA standards for potable water.
The Water Division has been successful in providing potable water which meets or exceeds DEQ and EPA standards. However, increasingly stringent water quality standards will require the Water Division to implement new programs, additional water quality monitoring during construction of new wells and additional sampling at the customer’s tap.

Benchmark 3: Provide adequate, reliable and economical wastewater treatment and disposal services.
The Wastewater Division has been successful in providing adequate, reliable and economical wastewater treatment and disposal services. Although continually a challenge with current growth levels and at times of peak loads, the Wastewater Division has been able to achieve the long-range goal of maintaining a minimum of one million gallons per day of excess capacity for all treatment units and process at the wastewater treatment facility. Excellent long-range and facilities plans are in place which provide for the continued expansion of wastewater facilities at the existing site to meet future growth.

Benchmark 4: Wastewater treatment services provided in compliance with federal, state, and municipal regulations.
The Wastewater Division is currently meeting federal, state and municipal regulations and requirements. The Division appears to have a firm grasp of the status of the continued efforts of the EPA, DEQ and the Idaho State Legislature to tighten requirements that impact wastewater treatment and disposal, and is prepared to comply as needed.

Benchmark 5: Provide development plan review, project application analysis and inspection services with input from and consultation with the development community and the general public in a timely and customer-friendly manner.
In many respects, the Engineering Division of the Meridian Publics Works Department is exceeding the levels of service provided by similar departments in other local municipalities. A significant number of the developers and contractors who regularly interact with the Engineering Division noted significant recent improvements with the Division’s ability to perform in a timely and customer-friendly manner. However, the majority of the same interviewees also noted that there were many areas where the services provided by the Engineering Division could be improved. Although the Engineering Division has, and does, overall provide acceptable service and achieve great results with the manpower and resources available, not all of the elements of this benchmark are being met.

Benchmark 6: Planning for water and sewer capital improvements, and archiving and mapping of city facilities
The planning services provided by the Engineering Division are absolutely crucial to the overall success of the Public Works Department to provide sufficient water and wastewater treatment and disposal services to meet future growth. Planning for capital improvements is an ongoing endeavor that involves not only the engineering division but the entire Public Works Department as well. The planning ability of the engineering division would be greatly improved with clearer direction from the Mayor and City Council. This would allow the department to set its goals and prioritize its resources in a more efficient manner. Although this team did not look into archiving and mapping as
currently performed, it recommends that the Department investigate electronic filing if it has not already done so.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
Employee job descriptions and organizational flow charts for the Public Works Department should be re-examined, clarified and updated.

It is the opinion of the public works team that both individual employee job performance, as well as the performance of the Public Works Department as a whole, could be improved through a further review and clarification of individual job descriptions and the chain-of-command. Although this recommendation will require the input and assistance of supervisors and staff at each level in the Public Works Department, implementation should occur under the direction of a qualified management consultant (see Recommendation #2, below).

Recommendation 2
Additional management training should be provided to each member of the Public Works Department who has management responsibilities.

Although the type and extent of management training required does vary between the various divisions, each division would benefit from additional management training. Just as with any other business, there are situations in the Public Works Department where employees have advanced to positions requiring management skills and responsibilities which they neither possess nor have been adequately trained to perform. Additional management training, combined with the further definition of job descriptions and the chain-of-command, would not only increase overall employee job performance but could also help to reduce stress and the potential for burn-out for staff and management as well. This recommendation could be accomplished by way of the continuation (and acceleration) of the outside management training currently being provided, possibly with the assistance of other management consultants as necessary.

Recommendation 3
A process improvement group should be formed for the purpose of on-going review with an eye toward further improvement of procedures and processes of the Public Works Department.

Members of the process improvement group (“PIG”) selected by the Mayor or Council should include specific supervisors and managers of the Public Works Department, representatives from the private sector (such as, developers, engineers, contractors), and possibly another interested citizen. The PIG would be an on-going committee that would meet at regularly-scheduled intervals for the purpose of evaluating Public Works Department processes, procedures and ordinances with the goal of assisting in continued efforts to find new and better ways to improve the overall performance of the Public Works Department. The PIG could be implemented immediately under the direction of the Mayor or Council. To remain effective, it is crucial that the PIG concept maintain the full support of the Mayor’s Office. Although the formation of the PIG will require the participation of the designated Public Works Department members, all other members should be volunteers so the initial fiscal impact on the City from the formation of the PIG would be very minimal. However, if implemented, it is anticipated that the actions of the PIG could very well result in increased savings to the city.
Recommendation 4
Identify growth priorities within the city master plan to assist the Public Works Department in setting its direction and its priorities.

As set forth in Benchmark #6, above, planning for capital improvements is an ongoing endeavor that involves the entire Public Works Department. The planning ability of the Department would be greatly improved with more input and clearer direction from the Mayor and City Council to identify growth priorities within the city’s master plan. This would allow the Department to set its goals and prioritize its resources in a more efficient manner. This recommendation should be implemented by the Mayor and City Council.

Recommendation 5
Enhance the Public Works Department’s portion of the city’s website to allow increased access to public works information and services via the Internet.

Excessive levels of growth continue to place additional demands on the Public Works Department. Consequently, it is more difficult for staff to respond in a timely manner to inquiries from applicants seeking approvals for public works projects and to other general inquiries. The enhancement of the city’s website could help by providing an additional method whereby interested parties could obtain information about the Public Works Department via the Internet at any hour of the day. For instance, it is recommended that the Public Work’s section of the city’s website contain up-to-date information regarding the status of all pending permits and applications to enable anyone to determine the current status of an application via the Internet without having to contact the Public Works Department. The web page should allow day-to-day business to be conducted online, such as providing application forms, hearing dates and times, and general information regarding the processes and procedures of the Public Works Department. It would also be beneficial to provide residents with an opportunity to pay their water and sewer bills, and applicants to pay their application fees, in a safe and secure manner online. A determination of the resources needed, length of time to implement, and budgetary impact is beyond the scope of this report and would be best addressed by the Communications & Information Services Team.
TRANSITION TEAM UNIT REPORT: REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

I. OVERVIEW

Objectives

- Examine transportation issues affecting the City of Meridian, including (but not necessarily limited to) inner-city traffic congestion and I-84 interchanges and overpasses. Interview Meridian residents, business owners and transportation and planning professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s transportation enhancement efforts with those of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Note strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements for communicating infrastructure needs and other alternative finance options the City can explore to accelerate improvements.
- Examine environmental issues affecting the City of Meridian, including (but not necessarily limited to) air quality, water quality and landfill usage. Interview Meridian residents, business owners and environmental professionals from other municipalities to obtain their insights. Compare the city’s environmental enhancements efforts and incentives with those of other similarly-sized cities in the Northwest. Note strengths and weaknesses and recommend improvements, if necessary.
- Identify all regional committees, commissions, task forces, and note if Meridian has representation on these groups. Detail how information is then disseminated to staff and decision makers so that the information can be used to its most potential benefit.
- Evaluate possible legislation that could improve the quality of life for Meridian residents. Identify pros and cons of such legislation as well as major interested parties.
- Recommend ways in which the city can promote transportation and environmental development on its internet website, and how such a course of action would or would not be beneficial to the city and its residents.
- Recommend appropriate performance measurements that will enable the city to monitor progress, if needed.

II. BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: Regional transportation partnerships

The following organizations are considered stakeholders in the City of Meridian:

- City of Meridian, Planning & Zoning Department *
- City of Meridian, Transportation Task Force *
- Meridian Chamber of Commerce
- Meridian Development Corp. (MDC)*
- Meridian School District
- Meridian Senior Center
- Ada County Highway District (ACHD)
- ACHD Capital Investments Citizens Advisory Committee (CICAC) *
- ACHD CommuterRide
- Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) *
- ValleyRide *
Treasure Valley Metro
Treasure Valley Partnership *
Major local employers
Boise State University, Center for Public Policy and Administration
Public Transportation Advisory Council
Idaho Commission on Aging
Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities
Idaho Department of Commerce
Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW)
Idaho Department of Labor
Idaho Division of Medicaid
Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Idaho Human Rights Commission, administers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Idaho Interagency Working Group for Public Transportation (IWG)
Idaho State Legislature, House Transportation and Defense Committee
Idaho State Legislature, Senate Transportation Committee
Idaho Task Force on Public Transportation
Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)
ITD Division of Public Transportation
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
U.S. Department of Justice, administers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
U.S. Medicare

*Representation appointed by Meridian City Council

Each of these does one or more of the following in Meridian:

- Provides transportation to specific individuals for a specific purpose,
- Provides current and future roadways for public use,
- Has done transportation studies,
- Has regulations specifying transportation requirements, and/or
- Has plans for some future aspect of mobility within Meridian.

As the central city in the Treasure Valley, Meridian’s future depends on current planning for full build-out – not just of Meridian, but also full build-out of the entire Treasure Valley. Future traffic will continue to criss-cross the valley by passing through Meridian. On the one hand, we have tremendous opportunity to capture the shopping and entertainment of the neighbors as they pass through. On the other hand, if the local planning organizations continue to under plan for only five-year or twenty-year increments, we will be subject to a traffic nightmare that will ruin “quality of life” and drive commerce elsewhere. There are plenty of bad examples in other states where cities failed to take a long-range view, or failed to factor in the growth and commuting habits of surrounding communities.

In southern California, roadway after roadway that was being built thirty and forty years ago consistently reached their “twenty-year design capacity” within three or four years of being built and now are regularly grid-locked. Further, no provision was made to accommodate transit stops. We should be alarmed if the same things happened with Eagle Road.

**Benchmark 2: Regional air quality partnerships**
In Meridian, the numbers of days when pollution is visible in the air is increasing annually. It becomes even more noticeable on days when a temperature inversion prevents the pollution from blowing away over the mountains.

**Benchmark 3: Regional water quality partnerships**
Traditionally, throughout the western United States, water has been apportioned based on seniority rights. In drought years, water users can demand that those who tapped into the water supply after they did must curtail their use of water. Generally, water drawn from surface rivers through canals and aqueducts was apportioned and prioritized separately from water drawn from underground aquifers through wells. More recently, after it was determined that surface and underground waters were not independent; efforts have been made to merge the two seniority rights systems.

In the southwestern United States, many cities in desert areas similar to Meridian have long been considering developing dual water delivery systems. The purpose is to preserve potable water for drinking and cooking by providing non-potable water for other uses such as landscaping, toilet flushing, street cleaning, etc. For the time being, most communities have concluded that retrofitting the infrastructure with the separate piping system required for delivery of non-potable water is too expensive.

**Benchmark 4: Solid waste disposal**
Ada County recently settled on a plan to open a new Landfill cell near the existing Landfill in the Northwest county area as the current cell reaches capacity and is sealed off. Part of this plan included encouraging BFI, the major hauling contractor outside of Meridian, to build and use a private Landfill in the southeast area of the county. Our committee supported this option because it “doesn’t put all the eggs in one basket” and it does allow for the most efficient transportation, and we were pleased with the County’s decision.

Another important element of solid waste management is keeping as much recyclable material out of the “trash stream” as possible. The noticeable environmental benefits are that Landfills last longer because less is going into them, and new products made from recycled materials usually require less energy and less raw materials to create than did the original products.

**Benchmark 5: Regional utility partnerships**
Cheaper utility rates are good for Meridian in three ways:
- They help the citizens keep their expenses low,
- They help the city as a user of utilities to keep expenses down, and
- Cheaper utilities attract businesses to relocate here.

There are a number of things that threaten low utility rates. Because Idaho Power is currently going through the process of re-licensing its Hell’s Canyon hydroelectric generating complex, it will serve as an example.

As with many natural resources, the raw material the utility depends on – flowing water – is essentially free. Capturing it, converting its motion to electricity, and delivering the electricity elsewhere is the expensive part. In addition, for the right to dam a river to generate electricity the utility must have a license from the federal government. Idaho Power’s Hell’s Canyon dam must be re-licensed every 50 years.

Idaho Power expects the current re-licensing process to take about ten years and cost half of a billion dollars. Hydroelectric generating is comparatively clean and cheap.
Idaho Power has taken good care of their complex, and expects that their license will be renewed. The issue is: how many requirements will environmental activists, who oppose the existence of the dam itself, be able to add to the conditions of the license?

Of the half-billion dollars that Idaho Power has set aside, 50 million dollars is being spent on compiling and filing the application itself. This includes doing all of the scientific good-faith studies to show how they are impacting the natural environment, and how they are working to mitigate the impacts. The rest of the cost is a set-aside because Idaho Power knows two more things: 1) the license will come with many new environmental conditions that will be expensive to implement, and 2) regardless of the conditions, some environmental activists will sue to have the license further conditioned or overturned entirely, at a great cost to defend the litigation.

Even achieving the re-licensing of the Hell’s Canyon complex is not the end of it for Idaho Power. Some day the Swan Falls dam will need to be re-licensed as will their other dams. Each dam is licensed individually. So, the process and a new expense will start again, and again.

With so much at stake, Idaho Power depends heavily on its long-range forecasting of the facilities and infrastructure that will be needed at full build-out of the Treasure Valley. Their margin for error is small, so while they build the pieces that are needed now, each piece must accurately support the full build-out scenario. Idaho Power is willing to share the reasoning behind their planning with city planners.

III. NEEDS ANALYSIS (COMPLIANCE WITH BENCHMARKS)

Benchmark 1: Regional transportation partnerships
With so many agencies involved in roadways and/or public transportation, Meridian cannot afford to abdicate its responsibility to determine how Meridian’s citizens will be mobile in the future. Meridian should be the leader in determining where and when roads get built, and where and how public transportation will operate. Meridian will be held responsible for the results.

Benchmark 2: Regional air quality partnerships
Not all of the pollution is generated from within Meridian. Farm and industrial emissions originate throughout the valley we share with other communities. Unlike some of our neighbors in the Treasure Valley, Meridian does participate in the Air Quality Board’s vehicle emissions testing program.

The federal government has listed certain chemical and particulate pollutants, and established levels at which they may be unhealthy for some or most people. Typical industrial opinion is that the levels are too restrictive, whereas common medical opinion is that the levels are far too generous. The federal government also has a formula, combining various levels of pollutant mix for a number of days over a series of years, that can yield a status called “non-attainment”. There are many ramifications to Federal regulations and funding if non-attainment status is achieved, and the Treasure Valley area has been teasing at non-attainment recently.

This is a “quality of life” and an economic development issue for Meridian. Businesses will not locate in an area where non-attainment is hanging in the air and where control of vehicular emissions is not universal. Non-attainment represents a fixed amount of measurable pollution. The portion that is available to businesses that are regulated diminishes in proportion as the amount generated by non-regulated vehicles increases.
At some point, if vehicle emissions are not reduced, businesses are squeezed out entirely.

**Benchmark 3: Regional water quality partnerships**
The quality of water in Meridian remains very good. The looming issue is quantity.

Meridian is located in a desert. One only has to look at an abandoned piece of property in or near Meridian to see how quickly it would all return to desert if the water supply couldn’t meet the growing demand.

Now, groups of water users in the Snake River Plain Aquifer, covering much of southern Idaho just east of Meridian (i.e., up watershed), are challenging the entire seniority rights system. It appears that the seniority rights system may be more tradition than law. The parties involved, with the help of the Idaho state legislature, have worked out a one-year interim solution, and are planning to develop a more permanent solution that may set a precedent for changing the traditions.

Add to this the fact that many people consider any method of seniority rights is flawed if it only prioritizes among human users, and doesn’t vest the other water-dependant species, such as salmon. Environmental activists will be sure to pounce on any water agreement that provides a crack in the existing seniority rights traditions. The results may have ramifications for the availability of potable water for growing Meridian.

Even if there is no change to the traditions, continued population growth in Meridian and the surrounding Treasure Valley guarantees that delivery of sufficient quantities of potable water will become a critical issue at some time. The ability to draw more water from existing wells and the right to drill more wells are subject to limitations that are not within Meridian’s control.

**Benchmark 4: Solid Waste Disposal**
In Meridian, the recycling program is not well supported because it is very difficult to use. One committee member performed an unscientific survey of recycling in his own neighborhood on a morning when the weather was comfortable for putting out trash, and found the following:

| Households where there was no apparent recycle effort, no recycle bin, and recyclables visible in the trash container | 40 | 65.6% |
| Households where there was recycling of newspapers only, or a few had newspapers and one other item (either Aluminum cans, or plastic bottles) | 16 | 26.2% |
| Households where there were three or more items being recycled | 5 | 8.2% |
| **TOTAL** | **61** | **100.0%** |

In discussions with neighbors, many state that they moved here from someplace where they recycled almost everything. They complain that the recycling program here requires separate storage areas in the garage for each item, and then special different packaging for each, along with specifically required placement in the recycling bin on trash day. Most state that they are simply not going to bother with all that, even though they feel badly about not continuing their recycling habits.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**
Recommendation 1:
Meridian should control its own transportation-related destiny.
- Meridian should embrace Idaho Power's example of forecasting the facilities and infrastructure that will be needed at full build-out, perhaps over the next seventy-five years. Once the full impact is forecast, Meridian will have a much better idea how to direct the responsible agencies toward what is best for Meridian in the short increments.
- Meridian should also include in its directions to the responsible agencies the initiatives that enhance quality of life, such as broadening and beautifying the entryway corridor roadways, and re-purposing Old Town to be a place to go “to” not “through” by prioritizing pedestrians and mass transit over individual vehicles. Then roads bordering and outside of Old Town need to be re-designed to handle the through traffic, both east-west and north-south, particularly every road with a river crossing from the north.

Recommendation 2:
Re-purpose the Meridian Transportation Task Force.
- The Task Force should be staffed by Meridian citizens, staff, and elected officials only.
- Non-Meridian experts should be invited when needed.
- Members should liaison with other regional stakeholders and attend their meetings.
- Members should meet together regularly for knowledge sharing.
- Creation of a “Meridian Mobility” strategic master plan should be a top priority of this Task Force.

Recommendation 3:
Hire a City of Meridian Transportation Planner.
- This position could serve as the Chairman of the Meridian Transportation Task Force.
- Promote Meridian’s strategic master plan to other stakeholders.
- Liaison to all Meridian City Departments on transportation-related issues.
- Liaison to senior, youth and client-based transportation users and providers.
- Ensure Meridian’s Planning and Zoning ordinances reward “smart growth” development and encourage transit stops.

Recommendation 4:
Ensure passage of transportation-related legislation.
- Enable secure funding for ValleyRide.
- Reinstate adequate Impact Fees for ACHD.

Recommendation 5:
Change Meridian Planning and Zoning ordinances to promote smart growth and enable alternate transportation.
- Identify transit facilities and inter-modal centers for the “Meridian Mobility” strategic master plan.
- Incorporate transit facilities and inter-modal centers into the Comprehensive Plan, Old Town Marketing Plan, and city ordinances.

Recommendation 6:
Give clean industries incentives to locate in Meridian.

Recommendation 7:
Purchase City vehicles that use "clean air fuels."

**Recommendation 8:**
Ensure passage of air quality-related legislation.
- Participate in Idaho State Legislature’s Interim Legislative Committee on Public Transportation and Air Quality.
- Direct DEQ to define and identify every “airshed basin” statewide, based on scientific topographical and meteorological boundaries, not on political boundaries.
- When local action is needed to avoid non-attainment, all within the same basin must participate in mitigation through an Air Management District.
- Enable secure funding for ValleyRide.
- Make vehicles that emit visible pollution subject to ticketing by State, County, and Local Police with a “fix-it” ticket. A “fix-it” ticket is a real citation for a violation, often used for minor problems like a broken tail light or headlight, that can be canceled and removed from the record if the violator takes a receipt with proof of repair to the Police Station within ten days.

**Recommendation 9:**
Maximize Meridian’s water quantity.

In the Treasure Valley, many elements of a dual delivery system already exist. Meridian has a real opportunity to help minimize future water shortages by preserving, expanding, and supplementing what currently exits.

- Partner with Irrigation Districts to preserve, expand, and supplement the dual water delivery infrastructure that exists in parts of the city.
- Conserve potable water for drinking and cooking by providing non-potable water city wide for appropriate uses, such as landscape irrigation or street cleaning.
- Investigate supplementing irrigation and other non-drinking uses with treated water from Meridian’s Waste Water Treatment outflow. Develop a system of reservoir ponds for outflow storage during non-irrigation season, and connect them to the city-wide non-potable water distribution network.
- Identify incentives for older housing to connect to the dual system.
- Defend the future water rights of both Meridian and the Irrigation Districts.

**Recommendation 10:**
Develop and execute a long-range solid waste action plan.

Since BFI is a commercial competitor to Meridian's hauling contractor SSC, SSC must preserve its ability to transport trash to the nearest and most economical site without being "priced out" for dumping at their competitor's Landfill.

Further, long-range planning should include SSC building a regional Waste Transfer Station to serve and profit from our neighbors' trash. Far in the future, it may be necessary to haul heavy loads out of the county. So, we would like to encourage SSC to make plans now to acquire access to the nearby railway line either through or around the Meridian School District Bus Facility located between SSC and the railway.

- Support use of the new landfill cell at the current County-owned landfill site (northwest county).
- Support an additional commercial landfill at the BFI site near Blacks Creek Road (southeast county).
- Support SSC development of a regional Waste Transfer Station.
• Encourage SSC to acquire access to the nearby rail line, through or around school bus yard, for future heavy hauling to Elmore County or elsewhere.
• Partner with the entire Treasure Valley to develop a user-friendly and expanded recycling program that benefits from the “economies of scale”.
• Legislation:
  ♦ Enable regional recycling programs, and explore investment credits for the operators.
  ♦ Explore incentives to collect methane gases, that are a by-product of landfills, for sale or use.

Recommendation 11:
Ensure quality utility service exists in the City of Meridian.
• Liaison with the development forecasting departments of the utilities, especially Idaho Power.
• Require under grounding along all Meridian Entryway Corridors.
• Encourage under grounding throughout the City.
• Encourage beautification of substations and junction boxes.
• Actively support each utilities’ efforts to maintain cheaper delivery of service.
Transition Team Members

Transition Team Chair
Name: Eric Cawley
Employer: Ada County Sheriff's Office
Occupation: Administrative Specialist
Meridian Resident: 10 years
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: To help ensure Mayor De Weerd's vision as articulated in her campaign comes to fruition.

Transition Team Vice-Chair
Name: Brad Hoagland
Employer: The Hoagland Group
Occupation: Association Management & Legislative Lobbying
Meridian Resident: 25 years
Community Involvement: Ada County Meals on Wheels advisory board, Precinct committee, Legislative committee chair, Valley Shepard Church of the Nazarene.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I want to see Meridian move forward. It is exciting to see the potential.

Transition Team Secretary
Name: Cheryl Brown
Employer: Meridian Joint School District #2
Occupation: Test Administrator
Meridian Resident: 19 years
Community Involvement: State board member of the Idaho Congress of Parent and Teachers Inc., past VP Council of Catholic Women, numerous Civic Organizations.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: Managed growth is key to Meridian, this is a wonderful city to work, live, and raise a family in, I would like to help ensure an even brighter future for our children.
Transition Team Administrative Assistant

Name: Peggy Gardner
Employer: City of Meridian
Occupation: Administrative Assistant to the Mayor
Meridian Resident: 7 years
Community Involvement: P&Z Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: Meridian is on the threshold of great opportunities. I am pleased to be a part of positive change for the future.

BILLING & FINANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Name: Deneen Wilson
Employer: Key Bank
Occupation: Key Center Team Leader
Meridian Resident: 7 years
Community Involvement: Board Member Meridian Chamber, Leadership Chair, Member of Meridian Kiwanis, Past President Executive Women Int'l.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I want to see Meridian move forward. It is exciting to see the potential.

Name: Glen Olsen
Employer: Olsen & Company CPAs
Occupation: CPA
Meridian Resident: 15 years
Community Involvement: Ore-Ida Council, Boy Scouts of America, Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Stake President Meridian West Stake Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I served as treasurer of the Tammy de Weerd for Mayor campaign.

BUILDING, PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT REPORT

Name: David Turnbull
Employer: Brighton Corporation
Occupation: Real Estate Development & Investments
Meridian Resident: 14 years
Community Involvement: Board of Directors Boise Family YMCA, Building Contractors Assoc., Various partnership with parks departments and school districts.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I am happy to contribute where I can.
**BUILDING, PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT REPORT**

**Name**: David Moe  
**Employer**: CM Company Inc.  
**Occupation**: Construction Estimator  
**Meridian Resident**: 14 years  
**Community Involvement**: Past Board Member P.A.L, City of Meridian Park & Rec. Commission, YMCA Advisory Board, City of Meridian Planning & Zoning Commissioner.  
**Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team**: I think Tammy will take the information gathered and try to implement its use.

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**Name**: Brad Miller  
**Employer**: Ronald W. Van Auken, Inc.  
**Occupation**: Real Estate Development  
**Meridian Resident**: Business located in Meridian 12 years  
**Community Involvement**: Boy Scouts of America, and youth sports.  
**Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team**: I am excited about Meridian and its future.

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**COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SERVICES REPORT**

**Name**: Renee Zaremba  
**Employer**: Hewlett-Packard  
**Occupation**: Marketing Manager  
**Meridian Resident**: 5 years  
**Community Involvement**: Mayor De Weerd’s Anti-Drug Coalition, supporter of the Boys & Girls Clubs.  
**Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team**: I am a concerned Meridian citizen and would like to be involved in shaping Meridian’s quality of Life.

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**Name**: Christine Donnell  
**Employer**: Joint School District No. 2  
**Occupation**: Superintendent  
**Meridian Resident**: 29 years  
**Community Involvement**: Board member of Boys and Girls Club, Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Member of Kiwanis, PAYADA, and United Way of Treasure Valley.  
**Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team**: A Positive relationship between the city and the school district is very important.
FIRE DEPARTMENT & POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Name: Eva Gay Yost
Employer: Self Employed
Occupation: Administrative Assistant
Meridian Resident: 7 years
Community Involvement: Precinct committeeman, and political consultant
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I believe in the process and in the future of Meridian.

Name: Andrew Giacomazzi
Employer: Boise State University
Occupation: Associate Professor of Criminal Justice Administration
Meridian Resident: 6 years
Community Involvement: WR/COPS Assessor Meridian Police Department, Boise Police Department Strategic Planning Team
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I viewed participation on the Transition Team as a way to serve in the city I live in, and as an opportunity to learn more about city services.

Name: Ron Anderson
Employer: City Of Nampa Fire Department
Occupation: Fire Chief
Meridian Resident: 25 years
Community Involvement: Past Meridian City Council member, Volunteer Firefighter
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I was feeling guilty for defeating mayor De Weerd in 1988 election for City Council.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Name: Chris Klein
Employer: Edward Jones Investments
Occupation: Financial Advisor
Meridian Resident: Business located in Meridian 5 years
Community Involvement: 2nd Vice president of the Meridian Chamber of Commerce, member of Kiwanis.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I wanted to be able to help make a difference in our city and to better understand internal city operations.
HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Name: Ed Engel  
Employer: QDS  
Occupation: President and General Manager  
Meridian Resident: Business located in Meridian 3 years  
Community Involvement: President of the Meridian Club and Vice President of the Meridian Education Foundation  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: Tammy asked me.

Name: Earl McCamnic  
Employer: Self Employed  
Occupation: Home Inspector  
Meridian Resident: 1 year  
Community Involvement: Anti Drug Coalition  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I respect Tammy and I helped her on her campaign for mayor.

MAYOR, CITY CLERK & CITY COUNCIL

Name: Bill Nary  
Employer: City of Boise  
Occupation: Attorney  
Meridian Resident: 19 years  
Community Involvement: Meridian City Council President, Meridian Optimist Club, Chamber of Commerce, Member of Meridian Gospel Tabernacle  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: Tammy asked me to participate. I felt it was important as a Council Member to be involved on the Transition Team.

PARKS, RECREATION AND YOUTH

Name: Joe Borton  
Employer: Foley, Freeman, Borton & Stem Attorney's  
Occupation: Attorney  
Meridian Resident: 7 years  
Community Involvement: Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Big Brothers/Big Sisters.  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I am interested in youth activities and education.
PARKS, RECREATION AND YOUTH

Name: Scott Blakeslee
Employer: Self Employed
Occupation: Student at Boise State University
Meridian Resident: 20 years
Community Involvement: Boise State Delegate, Eagle Scout, Legislative Intern, active in Church related service projects, 2 year mission in Venezuela.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: It was an opportunity to participate in local issues and give input on youth programs.

Name: James DeBoer
Employer: DNS Electronics
Occupation: Field Service Engineer
Meridian Resident: 4 years
Community Involvement: Board Member and past president of the Meridian Police Activities League
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I love Meridian! Communities the size of ours depend heavily on volunteers.

Name: Rachel Thornton
Employer: Self Employed
Occupation: Student
Meridian Resident: 10 years
Community Involvement: Member of Meridian High Key Club, NHS, Honor Roll Achievements, Student Council Representative, and Church Leadership Positions.
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: Looking forward to learning and having new opportunities.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Name: Tom McKinstry
Employer: Indian Creek Winery
Occupation: Sales & Marketing
Meridian Resident: 34 years
Community Involvement: Optimist Club of Meridian, Meridian Chamber of Commerce
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I wanted to become more involved. This is a great learning opportunity.
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT

Name: Tammy Bush  
Employer: The Cadd Shoppe, LLC & Meridian School District  
Occupation: Bookkeeper & Test Administrator  
Meridian Resident: 5 years  
Community Involvement: Local Unit PTA, District PTA, and Primary  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I am willing to help out when I can.

Name: Terry Smith  
Employer: Idaho Independent Bank  
Occupation: Financial Services  
Meridian Resident: 25 years  
Community Involvement: Past President Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, City of Meridian Transportation Task Force, Subcommittee Member MDC, Meridian Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Committee.  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I wanted to help create a smooth transition and to suggest new ideas and procedures for the city.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Name: Mark S. Freeman  
Employer: Foley, Freeman, Borton & Stem Attorneys  
Occupation: Attorney  
Meridian Resident: 18 years  
Community Involvement: Boys and Girls Club, Meridian Area Senior Citizens Assoc., Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Meridian Rotary Club, Optimist Club of Meridian, and others.  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I believed the process would be beneficial to both the city and community and welcomed the opportunity.

Name: Frank Varriale  
Employer: Primeland Development Co. & Gallery Homes by Varriale  
Occupation: Developer/Builder  
Meridian Resident: Business in Meridian 2 years  
Community Involvement: Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Boys and Girls Clubs, City Parks.  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I support the Mayor in her goals to promote family and youth within the city of Meridian.
# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>John Forsythe</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>DI4, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Resident</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce, business, schools, &amp; church.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: Mayor De Weerd asked for community input. She is a government leader who can gather the collective energy from the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dale Newberry</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Micro 100 Tool Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Resident</td>
<td>Business in Meridian 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Committee, Gem Community Development Group, and other civic activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I believe in being part of my community and we all have a responsibility to do our share.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rick Ritter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>State University – TECenter BSU West Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Technology Services Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Resident</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I believe that the city needs to actively be engaged in economic development on a proactive basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Lori Jones</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Investment Resources of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Investment Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Resident</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Meridian Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Committee, Meridian Downtown Corp., Meridian Kiwanis, and numerous civic organization affiliations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I want to be an active participant in promoting our community.
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS REPORT

Name: Randy Pipal  
Employer: Pipal-Anderson, Inc.  
Occupation: Insurance Agent/Owner  
Meridian Resident: 10 years  
Community Involvement: ACHD’s Capital Investment Citizen Advisory Committee, soccer coach, president of Dove Meadows Homeowners Assoc., past board member of Boise Association Independent Insurance Agents. 
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: This gave me the opportunity to work with our new mayor and other civic leaders on resolutions to those issues that will affect the lives of not only the current residents of Meridian, but the next generation.

Name: Dave Bivens  
Employer: ACHD.  
Occupation: Retired  
Meridian Resident: 20 years  
Community Involvement: Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, Valley Ride, Air Quality Board, Hill View United Methodist Church.  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I felt it was important to share my knowledge of transportation to help the City of Meridian.

Name: David Zaremba  
Employer: Self Employed  
Occupation: Transportation Planner  
Meridian Resident: 5 years  
Community Involvement: Meridian Planning and Zoning Commissioner, Board Member of Valley Ride, Air Quality Board, ACHD Capital Investments Citizens Advisory Committee, Meridian Transportation Task Force.  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I wanted to help Meridian take a regional leadership position as the central city in the Treasure Valley.

Name: Mark Snodgrass  
Occupation: State Representative, Teacher & Realtor  
Meridian Resident: 5 years  
Community Involvement: Pal soccer coach, Meridian Chamber of Commerce  
Reason you agreed to serve on the Transition Team: I support the new mayor and would like to be involved more with the community by partnering the city & state.