



# State of the City

BOISE 2011

PKilby '10

# From the Mayor



As our community continues its push toward full economic recovery, business and government leaders must do their part by working to create an environment that fosters innovation. It is innovation, more than any other quality, that will produce the fresh ideas and new opportunities that will lead to renewed prosperity. But what is the best tool to spark that innovation? The answer is simple: cities.

Cities are the staging grounds for innovation. They are where talent finds opportunity, where inspiration becomes implementation; quite simply, they are where things get done. A 2008 study by the Brookings Institution found that the largest 100 metro areas alone now generate three-fourths of the nation's domestic output. With this kind of economic impact, we must do everything possible to ensure that our city is maximizing its productivity.

A popular science writer named Steven Johnson recently published a book called *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*. In it, he traces the



progress of creativity and invention from the dawn of time to the present, and he concludes there was a turning point: the rise of agriculture, which led to the formation of cities.

Johnson calls the city “the great engine of supercreativity,” because good ideas arise from the connections that occur between people of all kinds, from all disciplines — and cities provide more opportunities for those connections.

Here in Boise, we are doing everything we can to encourage these interactions and expand our capacity for new ideas. Across a wide array of categories, the City of Boise is building the infrastructure and creating the atmosphere to promote a culture of innovation. Through collaborations such as The Greenhouse incubator and the Boise Water-Cooler; through recreational opportunities offered by the upcoming River Recreation

Park and the Foothills Serial Levy; through increased support of arts and cultural organizations; through new economic opportunities provided by the passage of HJR5, the continued presence of the TRACON radar system at the Boise Airport and the rental of city-owned rail property to the Boise Valley Railroad — in all of these ways and many more, we are striving to make Boise a magnet for entrepreneurs and creative thinkers of all sorts to lead us into the best possible future.

I hope you will join the City Council and me in making Boise a home for innovation. By doing so, we can make Boise more prosperous, more productive and, of course, more livable.

Sincerely,

David H. Bieter  
Mayor

# The Economy Begins to Rise

You could say that during the past year Boise's economy began to grow wings — because so much of the positive economic news has been initiated by the Boise Airport.

## TRACON

Last May, Mayor Bieter joined with our entire congressional delegation in celebrating their combined effort to keep Boise's TRACON (Terminal Radar Approach Control) system, and the jobs it supports, here at home. By keeping TRACON in Boise, we preserve high-quality local jobs, ensure continued safety and convenience for travelers, and protect the airport's position as a major hub for aviation and commerce. Retaining the system also helped save taxpayer dollars by avoiding the estimated increased cost of moving the system to another area.



In February the City received a Boeing 727 from FedEx for emergency training.

## HJR5

Passage of House Joint Resolution 5 by voters in November was an economic win for everyone in the Boise Valley and statewide. This resolution allows Idaho airports to once again sell revenue bonds for infrastructure improvements, which in turn will allow Boise Airport to stay competitive in attracting aviation and aviation-related businesses. Boise's geographic isolation makes it vital that our airport operate at maximum capacity to ensure our economic prosperity. HJR5 makes that possible while ensuring that taxpayer funds are never used for such projects.

## JUMP & WHOLE FOODS

Two major new downtown projects were approved to begin construction in Boise in 2011. The Simplot Foundation's JUMP (Jack's Urban Meeting Place) will rise

up between Front and Myrtle streets at the foot of the Connector, injecting significant new capital into Boise's construction sector and providing a new gathering place for a wide variety of arts and cultural activities. Noted grocer Whole Foods will break ground this summer on a new store at Broadway Avenue and Myrtle Street.

### **BIOMARK**

In March, the Mayor's Economic Development Division negotiated a deal to keep 30 high-quality jobs in Boise and generate new economic growth in an under-performing area of downtown. By entering into a lease agreement to provide new headquar-

ters space for Biomark, an innovative local tech company that manufactures electronic monitoring devices for fish and wildlife, the City retains and helps grow a strong local company while also creating new daytime activity in the Cultural District, complementing the existing arts, education, tech, media and retail activities at the southern end of Eighth Street.

### **CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION FACILITY**

This past February, construction was completed on a new 5,500-square-foot Customs and Border Protection facility at Boise Airport. With this new building, Customs and Border Protection field operations officers are now able to process general aviation international arrivals within a fully enclosed and updated facility. The new building replaces the 600-square-foot trailer that housed Customs for years and effectively doubles the processing capacity to meet future growth of both passengers and freight.

**A new Whole Foods market will break ground this year at Broadway and Myrtle.**



# The Military in the Spotlight

## “OUR TROOPS, OUR FAMILIES”

In August 2010, Mayor Bieter showed the City’s strong and continued support for our troops overseas and the loved ones they leave behind when he launched “Our Troops, Our Families,” a program to support military families during the year-long deployment of the 116th Cavalry Brigade and the 391st U.S. Army Reserve to Iraq.

The year-long program provides military families a variety of free recreational activities during each season of the year. Activities to date have included free admission for Guard families to Zoo Boise on a Saturday in October; two free ice-skating events at Idaho IceWorld; “PC Saturday,” which provided military families with tech



support on their PC or laptop computers; fire station tours for military families at multiple stations across the city; and the upcoming free military family swim day at IvyWild Park on July 9. Other successful events include the School Break program for military families at the Boise Watershed and the Military Family Day at Boise Public Library’s “Get Loud at the Library” event.

“Our Troops, Our Families” has been so successful, it recently earned the City of Boise the “Seven Seals” Award by the U.S.

**Military families enjoy free skating at Idaho IceWorld as part of the City’s “Our Troops, Our Families” program.**

Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program. The award was presented to the Mayor and City Council at a ceremony in City Hall in March.

In addition to launching "Our Troops, Our Families," the Mayor also signed the Community Covenant to formally commit Boise's strong support for its soldiers and their families. The Community Covenant

program was launched April 17, 2008, in Columbus, Georgia. Since the program's inception, more than 450 covenants have been signed in 48 states, three territories and the District of Columbia.

As he launched the program, Mayor Bieter urged everyone in our community, from local businesses to individuals, to do whatever they can to lend a hand with the military families in their area. "Whether it's volunteering to do the weekly shopping, delivering a prepared meal or just raking your neighbor's lawn, there are many ways we can repay these families for their service to our nation," Mayor Bieter said.



**Mayor Bieter signs the Community Covenant to support our soldiers and their families.**

# An Increase in Livability



## RAY NEEF MD RIVER RECREATION PARK

On April 5, Mayor Bieter announced a second major contribution by the J.A. & Kathryn Albertson Foundation to fund the upcoming Ray Neef MD River Recreation Park, bringing the foundation's total gift to \$1.7 million. The new park will be a major addition to Boise Parks & Recreation's long list of premier park facilities.

Located on the Boise River between Main Street and Veterans Memorial Park, the river park will generate economic development and provide a world-class recreational experience in the heart of Boise. The project will also improve the fish habitat and riparian area in a section of river that was chan-

**Downtown traffic boxes became canvases for local artists as part of the City's Neighborhood Reinvestment Grant program.**

nelized during the mid-1900s. Ultimately, features will include in-river drops, chutes and boulder obstacles as well as riverbank seating areas and Greenbelt improvements.

Because of the foundation's generosity, construction of Phase I of the park is expected to be completed by spring 2012, though the fund-raising drive continues to support the park's future phases.

## SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS

Three years after becoming an official City department, the Department of Arts & History is proving to be a major component of Boise's rich cultural fabric.

Last year, Arts & History partnered with the Mayor's Economic Development Division in creating a new Economic Development Grant program to maintain the positive impact cultural groups have on our local economy. As part of the program, Trey McIntyre Project was named the City's first Cultural Ambassador, with additional grants going to Idaho Shakespeare Festival, the



**Phase One of the Ray Neef MD River Recreation Park is expected to be completed in 2012.**

Basque Museum and Cultural Center, Ballet Idaho and Boise Contemporary Theater. These grants were in addition to the annual Arts & History Grants that provided support to 17 cultural initiatives and four local organizations.

Arts & History also completed five major public art projects for the Percent for Art program, forged 11 public art partnerships and initiated a new Summer Lunch Jam series, with 13 lunchtime performances in the Grove Plaza last summer.

### **BOISE LIBRARY!**

With improved access to library services, Boise's library usage has continued

to grow. In the current economic climate, residents have particularly appreciated more access to computers, resources for job seekers and free entertainment options. Library visits are up almost 3% and circulation 6% over last year; an average of 4,235 people visit Boise's libraries every day, with average daily checkouts of 7,115 items. The library also introduced eBooks to its collection in November with stunning success. eBooks were checked out 6,346 times in just the first three months.

### **AMERICA'S PROMISE**

For the third time, the City of Boise was named one of the America's Promise Alliance 100 Best Communities for Young People. The award recognizes communities that make youth a priority by implementing programs that help keep children in school and prepare them for college and the 21st century workforce.

### **VOLUNTEER RECORD**

Boise Parks & Recreation had a fantastic year of volunteer service. Volunteers throughout the Treasure Valley dedicated their talents, ideas, and skills for a total of 62,015 hours. This is equivalent to the department having approximately 30 additional full-time employees and saved the community \$899,134 in labor costs.

# A Focus on Service

## CRIME RATE DROPS

The latest crime figures show that Boise is growing even safer. Stats released in February show that crime has dropped in Boise for the sixth straight year, with serious felonies down 25.8% since 2005. As Police Chief Michael Masterson noted, that means 2,140 fewer crime victims in Boise in the past six years. Burglaries in Boise dropped to their lowest number since data began being collected in 1980.

## 36TH STREET FOOTBRIDGE

The 36th Street Footbridge connecting Boise and Garden City opened in March to the delight of Greenbelt users and area school children, among others. The bridge will make it safer for students of Whittier Elementary and Anser Charter to travel to and from school, and will also connect residents more easily to the upcoming Esther Simplot and Ray Neef MD River Recreation parks.

## CURB IT

The “Curb It” program will soon add a subscription glass collection to a menu that already includes the popular no-sort recycling program. Customers who choose to recycle glass curbside will get a third bin for pick-up, allowing this abundant resource to be crushed and recycled locally.

## LED STREETLIGHTS

The successful LED streetlight project was finished in May, with more than 2,000 LED lights installed across the city, including many historic lights in Downtown Boise. The 60-percent energy savings will reduce the City’s carbon footprint and save taxpayers \$50,000 a year in power costs.



Mayor Bieter and Garden City Mayor John Evans cut the ribbon on the new 36th Street Bridge.

**More than 2,000 LED lights have been installed in Boise, saving taxpayers \$50,000 per year in energy costs.**



### **EMERGENCY READINESS**

The City's Fire Department continued to improve upon its strong emergency response record. Over the last year, Fire completed a citywide Standard of Cover analysis to determine the best use of staffing and response locations, ensuring the best possible emergency response times. The department also established an All-Hazard Emergency Management Type 3 Team, which significantly expands the scope of the department's response capabilities.

### **ONLINE PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Planning and Development Services Department implemented an electronic development plan review system for both Planning and Building applications. This new "ePlan" system allows customers to submit

their plans via the internet while increasing the speed and ease of staff reviews.

### **HYATT HIDDEN LAKES RESERVE**

Construction will begin on the 44-acre Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve this winter. Located at the corner of Maple Grove Road and McMillan Street, this urban wildlife sanctuary will also serve as an innovative stormwater treatment project featuring sand filters, porous parking lots, pathways and educational kiosks.

### **PHARMACEUTICAL COLLECTION PROGRAM**

In the first full year of operation, the Boise/Garden City/Ada County Pharmaceutical Collection Program gathered a total of 1,806 pounds of outdated or unwanted medications. At City Hall West, residents dropped off 393 pounds of unwanted prescription and over-the-counter drugs in 2010.

### **ALIVE AT 25**

Boise police are now offering a free class to teens and young adult drivers called "Alive at 25." The four-hour program is taught by Boise Police officers and teaches young drivers safe driving practices and the consequences of unsafe driving.

# A Community Pulls Together

The Have a Heart program encourages giving to local organizations that offer real-life change to people in need.



## “HAVE A HEART, GIVE SMART”

In 2010 Boise launched a public outreach effort to encourage charitable giving to service organizations that have the greatest positive impact on the homeless in our community. Called “Have a Heart, Give Smart,” this innovative program encourages residents to divert donations they would have provided to panhandlers and to give instead to local organizations that offer real-life change to those in need.

The project began as a summer pilot program at Albertsons on 16th and State streets, then grew to a citywide education effort by the end of the year. The aim of the program is to link available services with those most in need, creating long-term solutions instead of quick fixes.

## PIONEER COMMUNITY DAY SHELTER

Last winter, Boise Parks & Recreation opened the Pioneer community center for drop-in use by homeless families. Located at 500 S. Ash St. in the River Street neighborhood south of downtown, Pioneer offers

safe haven from the cold with games, computer access and youth activities provided by city staff. Participants are referred to the program from Corpus Christi House, Inter-faith Sanctuary, City Lights or River of Life.

### **CATCH**

The City's highly successful CATCH program (Charitable Assistance to Community's Homeless) crossed a major milestone recently when it served its 100th family since the program's inception in 2007. CATCH, which transitions families out of homelessness into self-sufficiency, currently houses 22 families and was recently named a finalist in the federal Department of Health and Human Services' "Promising Models" national study. CATCH has also been successfully replicated in Canyon County.

### **HOUSING SERVICES**

The City's Housing and Community Development program continued to contribute to our city's livability. Recently, the HCD division secured more than \$2.4 million in federal funding, in addition to

placing more than 20 homeless individuals in supportive housing and acquiring and renovating a dozen foreclosed homes, with several homes being sold to new buyers.



The City of Boise is a partner in the annual "Burgers for Bikes" program which donates hundreds of bikes to children each year.

# Overheard

“Best Town in America.”

— *Outside magazine*  
(August 2010)

“Its capital is like Denver, but smaller and easier to get around. It’s a high-tech center, one of the best places in the country to start a business. And the great skiing at Bogus Basin doesn’t hurt.”

— *Life magazine, Most Underrated Cities in the West* (June 2010)

“Boise is a growing town of over 200,000 residents, not one of whom, I’m already convinced, possesses an ounce of rudeness in his or her body.”

— *SLAM: Your Source for the Best in Basketball* (August 2010)

One of “America’s Top College Football Towns”

— *Budget Travel magazine*  
(September 2010)

“Boise equals ‘high-desert oasis.’ Translation: It’s a long drive to the next metropolis — six hours to Salt Lake, nine to Portland. That’s OK with locals. Remoteness breeds a cultural self-sufficiency perfect for urbane outdoorsy types.”

— *Fox News* (January 2011)

No. 2, “Top Growth Towns for Families”

— *U-Haul International Inc.*  
(February 2011)

No. 6, “Best Places to Retire”

— *CNN Money*  
(September 2010)





No. 7, "Best Cities for Women"

— *Women's Health magazine* (December 2010)

"Boise as an edgy urban city known for food and wine, art and culture? Not so much. Until now."

— *Sunset magazine* (March 2011)


Top 10, Population 500,000 to 1 million, "Healthiest Independent Retail Markets in the Nation"

— *American Booksellers Association* (January 2011)

"With the Boise Greenbelt, an 18-mile running and biking trail in the city, as well as short drives to mountainous, desert and river environments, it's not surprising that Boise makes the top five. Possibly adding an assist? The city's large Basque population, many of whom practice herri kirolak, a series of rural sporting competitions during the quinquennial Jaialdi festival in July."

— *Time magazine and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, America's 15 Most Physically Active Cities* (February 2011)





The Mayor and City Council this year said goodbye to a dear colleague, Vern Bisterfeldt, who assumed his new position as Ada County Commissioner in January.

Mayor Bieter's appointment of Lauren McLean to fill Bisterfeldt's seat was greeted with great enthusiasm by the community due to Lauren's extensive history of civic involvement.



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