

# LINEN BLOCKS ON GROVE STREET

## PLACEMAKING AND REINVESTMENT STRATEGY

Phase I Visioning: Preliminary Findings Report

July 2021

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Interactive Street Art at the Linen Building

## Table of Contents

- 1. About the Project**
  - Overview
  - Project Area
  - Project Purpose and Approach
- 2. History and Context**
  - Current Conditions Summary
  - Relevant Plans
  - Infrastructure Assessment and Mobility Conditions
  - Cultural Resources and Public Art
  - Historic Research and Themes
- 3. Initial Stakeholder Outreach**
  - Overview
  - List of Interviewees
  - Interview Summaries
- 4. Development Potential and Considerations**
  - CCDC Strategies
  - Potential Projects and Areas of Opportunity
  - Current and Potential Projects Map
  - Next Steps

*Prepared for CCDC by Agnew::Beck, 2021 | Historical research conducted by Stevens Historical Research Associates*



## About the Project

### Overview

The intent of Capital City Development Corporation’s (CCDC) Placemaking and Reinvestment Strategy effort is to make deliberate, impactful, community-supported investments in the Linen Blocks on Grove Street that will spur public-private transformation of the street. Intended outcomes from this process include:

- Redevelopment of the streetscape for improved functionality and placemaking features,
- Improvements to infrastructure that increase functionality and promote private investment,
- Identification of other potential projects and programs that would support revitalization of the street, and
- Relationship-building among stakeholders who are key community members, and public and private partners in realizing the reinvestment strategy.

A successful effort relies on engagement and support from public and private partners – in particular, local businesses, Citywide and nearby residents, property owners and public agencies.

Specifically, the initial phase of the project is aimed at creating a collaborative, long-term vision for the “Linen Blocks on Grove Street” that includes specific design recommendations and investment actions intended to protect and preserve important features and characteristics endemic to the street, while transforming other aspects where change is needed. In the visioning process, primary focus is on Grove Street itself between 10th and 16th Streets, and the properties immediately adjacent to the street.

Creating a collaborative, community-supported vision for the street is a first phase of work intended to drive the overall reinvestment strategy, and to motivate a modern-day transformation of the Linen Blocks on Grove Street.



Green wall installation on Grove Street

## Study Area

The Linen Blocks on Grove Street project examines eight city blocks along the west end of Grove Street, within Boise’s downtown area, with particular focus given to Grove Street itself between 10th and 16th Streets. The project area is located within two of CCDC’s urban renewal districts, River-Myrtle/Old Boise and Westside. These districts will expire in 2025 and 2026, respectively. The maps below identify the study area and its location within the urban renewal districts.

Figure 1: Study Boundaries and Focus Area

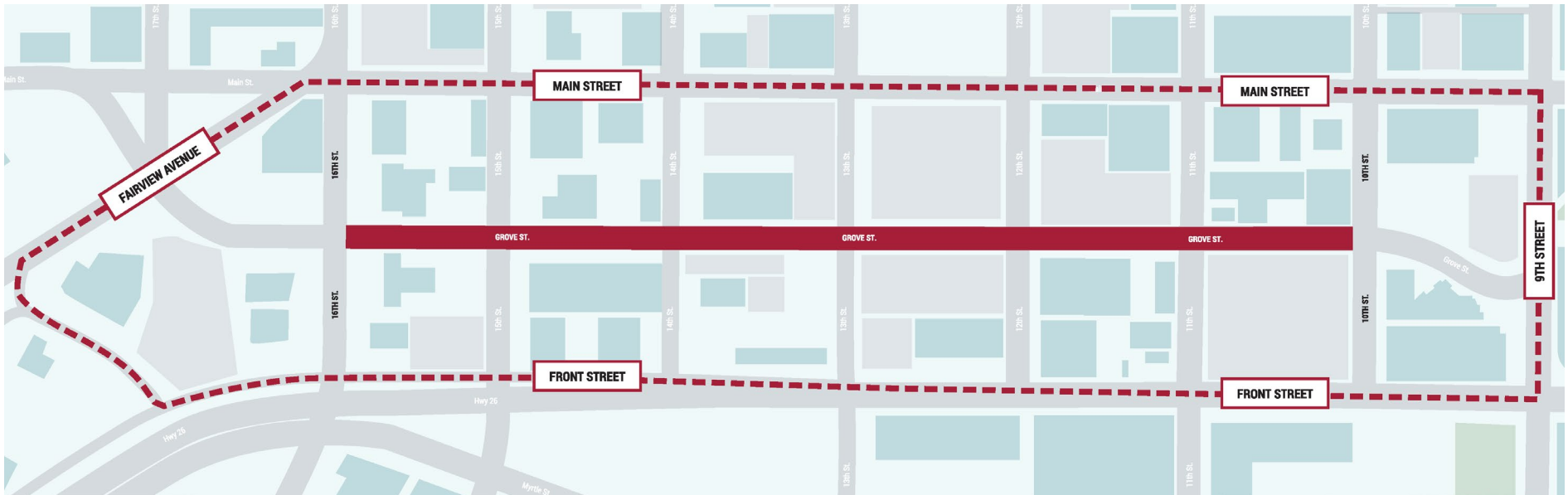
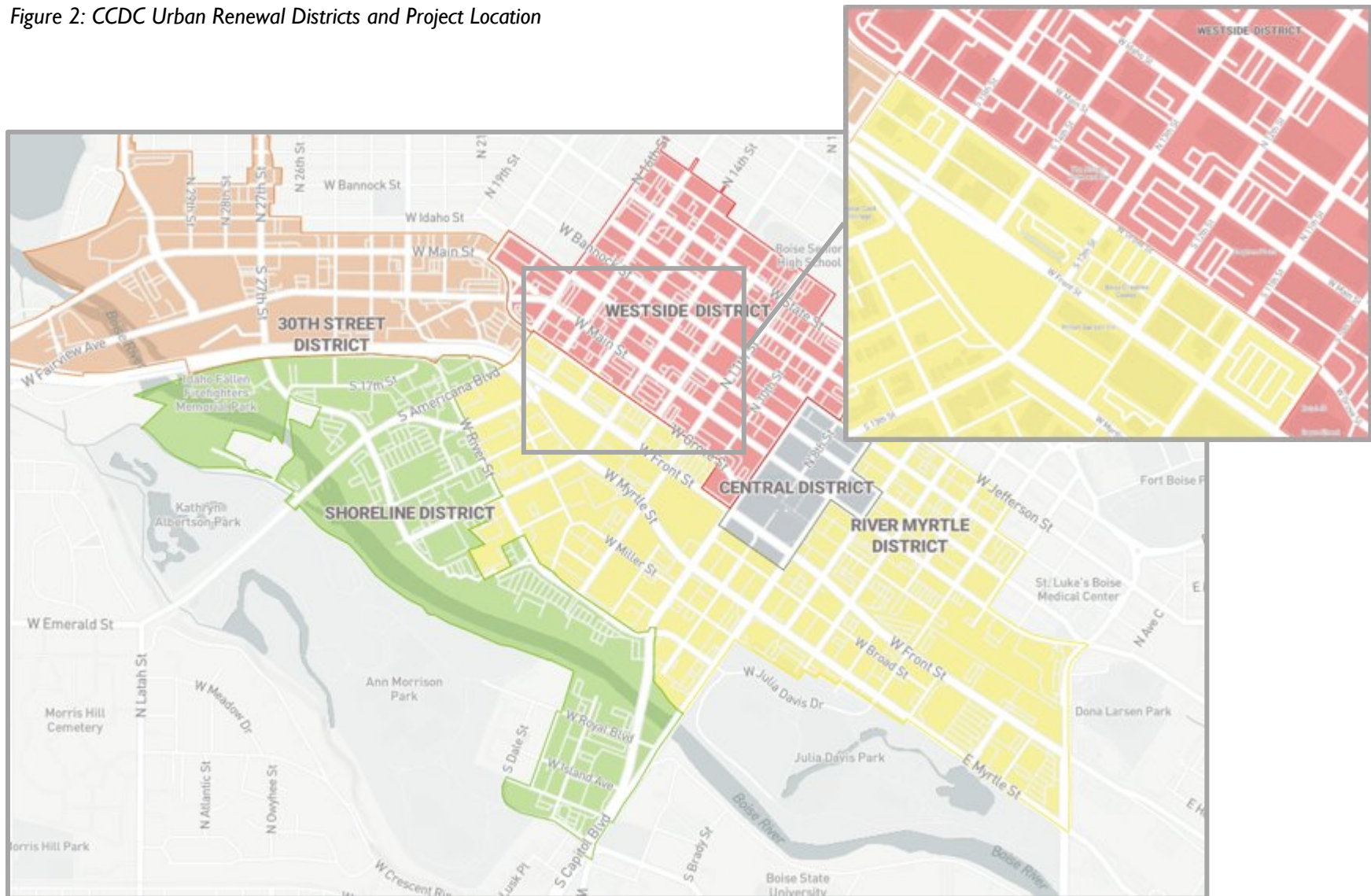


Figure 2: CCDC Urban Renewal Districts and Project Location



## **Project Purpose and Approach**

The Linen Blocks on Grove Street placemaking and reinvestment strategy is intended to usher positive changes and direct investment into the project area to meet the interests of public and private stakeholders. Upfront public investment is needed to update the street to current standards, to complement other public investments and, importantly, to catalyze private investment; a coordinated vision ensures that the overall placemaking and reinvestment strategy reflects and supports community desires.

CCDC's process and resulting public investments – which are slated to include streets, sidewalks, stormwater systems, lighting, public art, street trees and furnishings and public spaces – will stimulate economic benefits for a wide variety of stakeholders and support key initiative areas for other public partners (e.g., City of Boise, Ada County Highway District, Valley Regional Transit, etc.). Most importantly, as evidenced by other areas of downtown, the initial investments CCDC makes are effective in catalyzing and leveraging private market investments. Together these forces, guided by the community, will improve the Linen Blocks on Grove Street. CCDC is a critical, “first in” partner that makes significant investments in:

- **Placemaking:** Creating an attractive district that draws more commerce and visitation into this area, supporting local business;
- **Mobility:** Improving employee, visitor, business and resident ability to move to and through the district through sidewalk, bike facility and roadway investments;
- **Housing and Infrastructure:** Catalyzing more housing and general development, through infrastructure investments that reduce development costs and upgrade to the most current standards;
- **Fiscal Sustainability:** Increasing economic stability of downtown and the downtown tax base.

The Vision Phase will further the overall placemaking and reinvestment strategy by:

- Confirming, at a high-level, current infrastructure conditions and deficiencies;
- Documenting community needs and interests;
- Verifying the need for previously proposed public investments and identifying any additional required or desired investments to further economic development, mobility, placemaking, housing and other priorities;
- Identifying important aspects of the street of historic and cultural significance and identify ways to recognize and incorporate it;
- Articulating design elements for the streetscape and for the area as a whole;
- Serving as a transparent coordinating and organizing document among public and private partners and the general public.

**Proposed Process**

Visioning occurs early in the Placemaking and Redevelopment Strategy Process. Figure 3 below show Visioning and Stakeholder Engagement in the overall process, and Figure 4 further identifies the steps involved in Visioning.

Figure 3. Placemaking and Redevelopment Strategy Approach

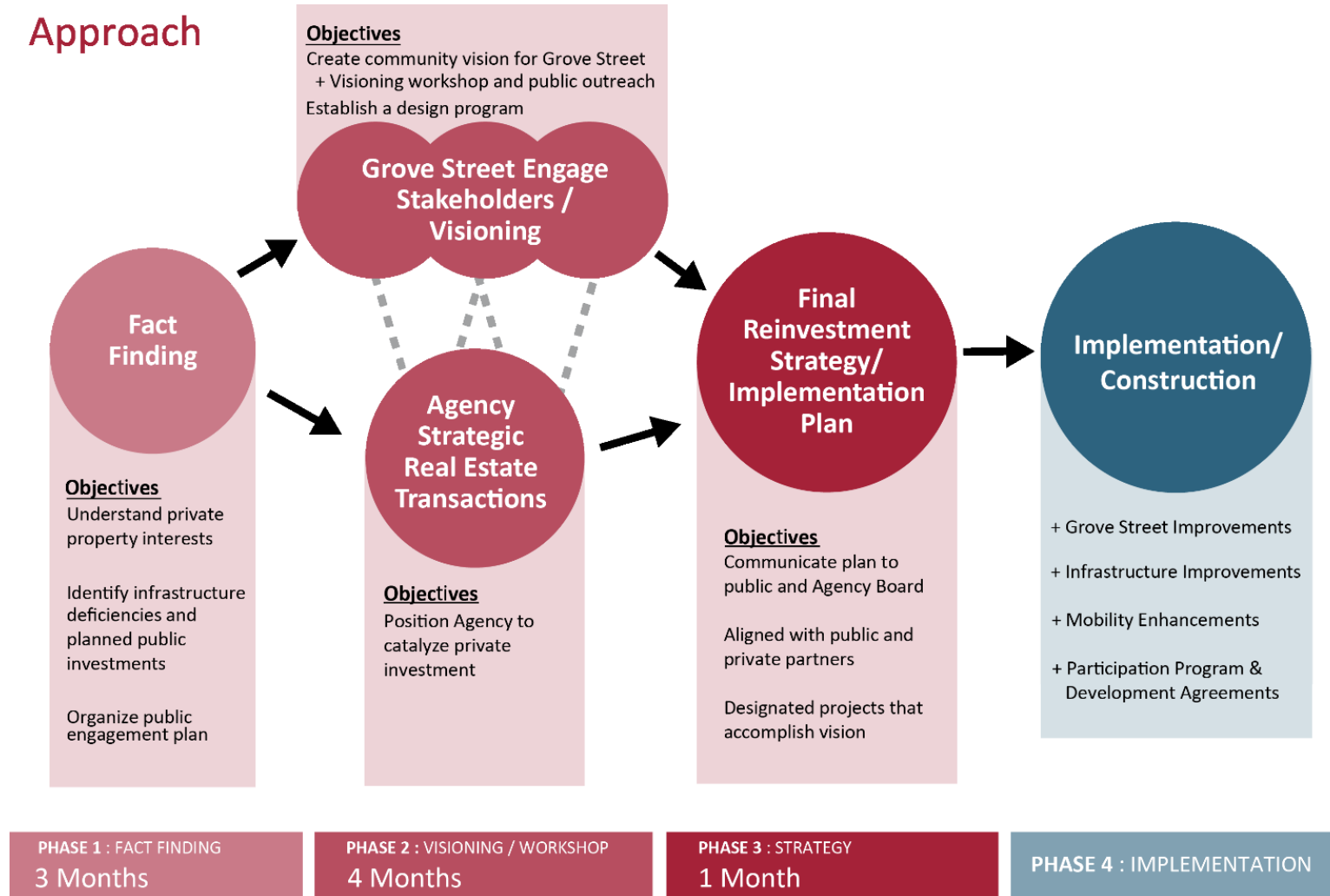


Figure 4. Projected Visioning Timeline





## 2. History and Context

### *Current Conditions Summary*

For nearly a century, the Linen Blocks have been home to a variety of light industrial uses created and built by immigrant entrepreneurs that can still be seen today. You can find an automotive shop, wholesale and reuse supply stores, a print shop, and restauranteurs operating along the street. Retailers and art organizations have settled in, in recent decades, bringing with them artful signage, colorful shopfronts and building murals. The mix of uses is slightly surprising, and in its own way, attractive. Stretches of parking lots and unoccupied storefronts occasionally break up the blocks; umbrella-covered patios, shady green trees and stark urban concrete take turns dominating different sections of the district.

At the northeast corner of 14th and Grove Streets stands The Linen Building, and next to it a holding tank bearing a “Linen District” sign. In 2004, local developer David Hale began repurposing the old American Laundry Company building into the space now known as The Linen Building, and introduced the Linen District brand concept. Hale’s effort to capture some of the area’s historic character and use it to create space for artisans, creatives and a distinct downtown district attracted attention and interest. The Idaho Coalition on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault currently owns and manages the building and has noted that steam laundry workers, like those employed by the American Laundry Company, were also frequently suffragettes and labor rights activists – further tying the street’s working class history into its ongoing transformation.

One area of opportunity to connect the historical uses of the area to Boise’s current needs is through the reintroduction of housing in the area. Once home to mansions-turned-boarding houses, the Linen Blocks today are most lively during weekdays, without much of the evening and weekend bustle that would have been the hallmark of life in earlier times when streetcars and trains rumbled through.

The Owyhee Plaza and Modern Hotel stand alongside the Linen Building showcasing the power of adaptive reuse. As public and private partners collaborate to envision and realize the next evolution of the Linen Blocks on Grove Street, they have the opportunity to contribute to building a truly distinct downtown district by addressing lingering liabilities, continuing the process of adaptive reuse, and harboring and expanding on the Linen Blocks’ significant and unique assets.



Current Linen District brand

Figure 5. At-a-Glance Catalog of Assets and Issues

ASSETS	ISSUES
High-degree of local support among property owners, businesses and other area stakeholders for coordinated public-private reinvestment	Numerous surface parking lots on several blocks
Unique history and character as an eclectic, “light industrial” area that translates into a modern creative/craft/maker/arts district	Streetscape design improvements – inconsistent sidewalk and bicycle lane infrastructure, needed ADA-compliant improvements, many driveways and curb cuts along sidewalks and into bike lanes
Strong and distinct local businesses and many other commercial retailers and restaurants	Unappealing pedestrian environment (lack of shade, things to see)
Some long-time businesses such as Oakley Moody Service which has been in operation since 1972	No year-round anchoring tenant or attractant activity
Low-volume traffic corridor connecting directly to the Grove Plaza to the east	Activity significantly slows in evening and weekends
Performance, visual and other creative organizations located here, including Treefort and LED	Underdeveloped tree canopy and relative lack of greenery
Availability of undeveloped parcels	Complicated parking environment – parking is managed by public agencies and individual property owners and supplied by a mix of low-cost or free on-street public parking and free storefront private parking; very little available structured parking north of Front Street
Presence of urban renewal districts makes reinvestment resources available	Few housing options in the immediate area
	Upgrades to stormwater and broadband infrastructure

## Relevant Plans

Several adopted areawide plans provide general guidance for development along the Linen Blocks, including *Blueprint Boise*, the City of Boise Comprehensive Plan and ACHD's *Roadways to Bikeways* Plan. More specific, smaller area plans were referenced during the visioning phase, including those listed and described below.

### District Plans

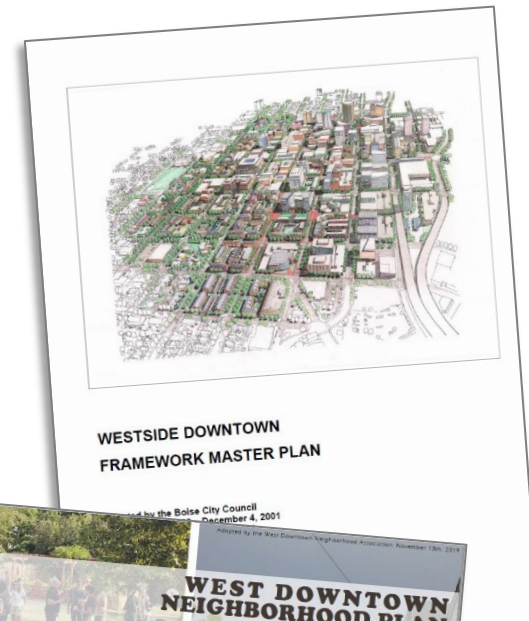
The River-Myrtle/Old Boise District Urban Renewal Plan (2004) and the Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan (2001) identified key public investments including:

- Compact, urban, pedestrian-oriented design that integrates a mix of uses and generates district identity.
- Streetscaping designs that work well with new development and create momentum for activation and vitality.
- Securing funding for public open spaces, gathering spaces, and plazas that meet the needs of the area.
- Where possible, integrate medium to high-density residential units of mixed housing to support the area and catalyze investment.
- Provide support for quality hotels and drivers of area tourism.
- Support retail and commercial uses with development that spurs economic development and attracts users that stay in the area.
- Provide public parking in structures to catalyze compact, urban style development on existing surface lots.

These previous suggestions and planning efforts formed the basis for launching the Linen Blocks on Grove Street Placemaking and Reinvestment Strategy.

### Other Plans

Other, more recent plans relevant to the area are the West Downtown Neighborhood Plan (City of Boise, 2019), the Downtown Boise Implementation Plan (ACHD, 2013) and the Linen District Cultural Concept Plan (CCDC, 2010).



## Infrastructure Assessment and Mobility Conditions

### Identified Improvements

CCDC and ACHD conducted an on-the-ground assessment of the conditions on the Linen Blocks on Grove Street. This assessment identified the following need infrastructure improvements:

- Implement accessibility improvements along 3,264 lineal feet of sidewalk.
- Implement accessibility improvements at sixteen (16) curb ramp locations and non-compliant driveways.
- Upgrade Grove Street roadway surface in accordance with street standards and in compliance with needed improvements identified in Downtown Boise Improvement Plan (DBIP); current Pavement Condition Index (PCI) on Grove Street in the Linen Blocks is 68-70.
- Address existing stormwater deficiencies and incorporate green stormwater infrastructure.
- Upgrade Grove Street bike facilities to implement regional low-stress bikeway network as identified in the *Roadways to Bikeways* plan. Including coordinate with ACHD to ensure that the bike facilities meet plan recommendations and ACHD bike and pedestrian performance measures.

### Mobility Characteristics

Grove Street is a two-way, two lane road that supports pedestrian, bike and vehicle traffic and connects into the core area of downtown Boise that is served by public transit. Key mobility characteristics of the Linen Blocks on Grove Street include:

- Continuous sidewalk on both sides of the street.
- Continuous bike lanes on both sides of the street from 9th to 30th Street.
- A designated low-stress bikeway in development on 11th Street that intersects with Grove Street and provides connection to the Boise River Greenbelt to the south and Camel’s Back Park to the north.
- Controlled intersections, including a mid-block bike/pedestrian signalized crossing across 9th Street.
- Relatively lower-volume traffic on Grove compared to nearby streets.
- Free public and private parking at many points along the street.

Potential impediments to bike and pedestrian travel in the Linen Blocks of Grove Street include:

- Higher volumes of cross-traffic on several streets including 9th, 13th, 15th, and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- Narrower sidewalks accommodating many street furnishings, trees and public art on some blocks.
- Lack of shade trees, awnings/overhangs or other greenery on some blocks.
- Driveways and curb cuts throughout the blocks.

Figure 6. The American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) PCI Classification

PCI range	Class
85-100	Good
70-85	Satisfactory
55-70	Fair
40-55	Poor
25-40	Very Poor
10-25	Serious
0-10	Failed

Figure 7. ACHD Bike Facilities Map (showing project area)

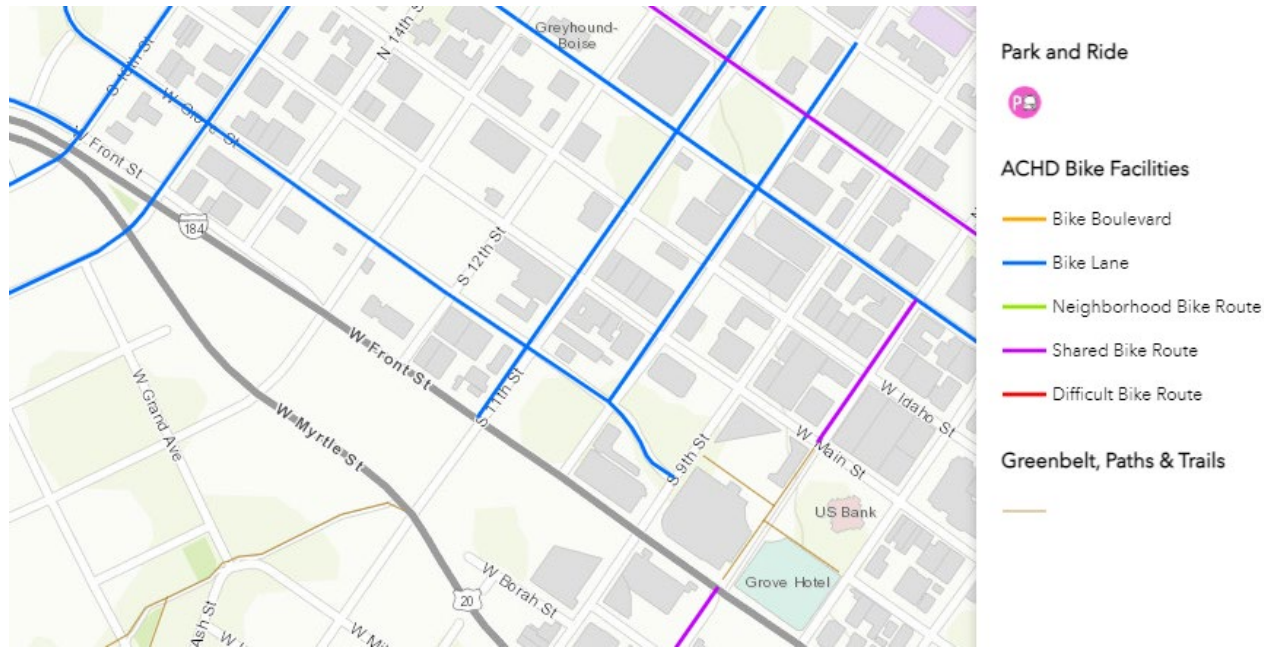


Figure 8. 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway Project

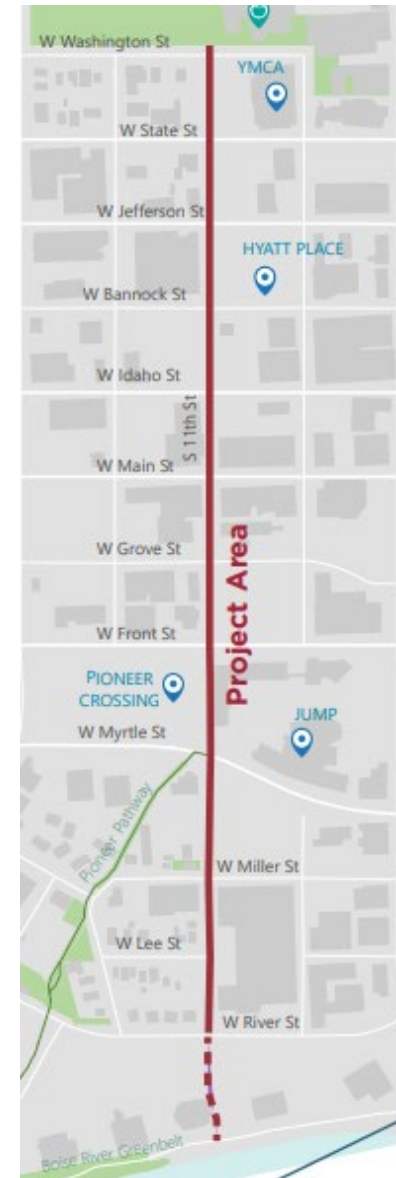
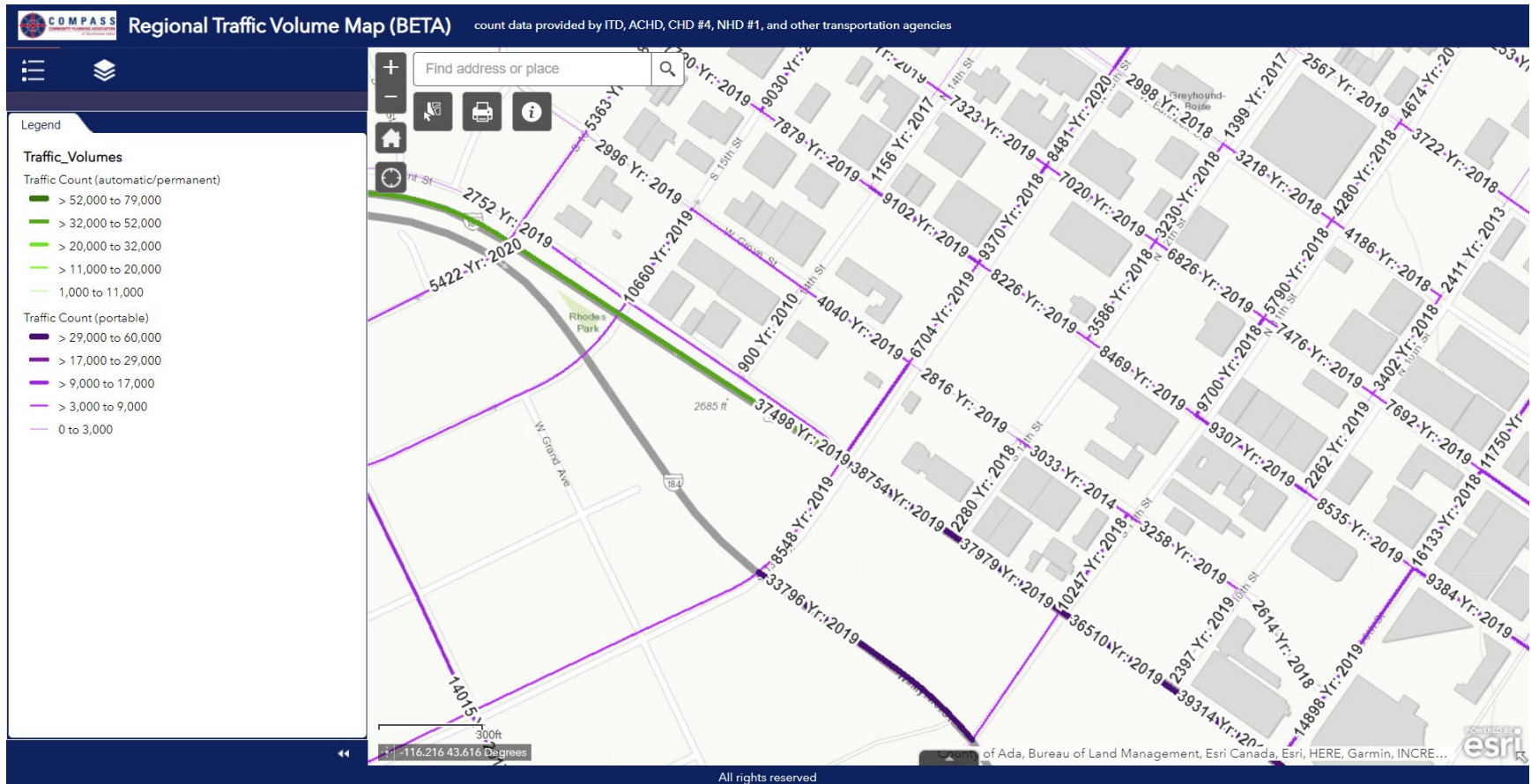


Figure 9. COMPASS Consolidated Traffic Count Data (showing project area)



## Cultural Resources and Public Art

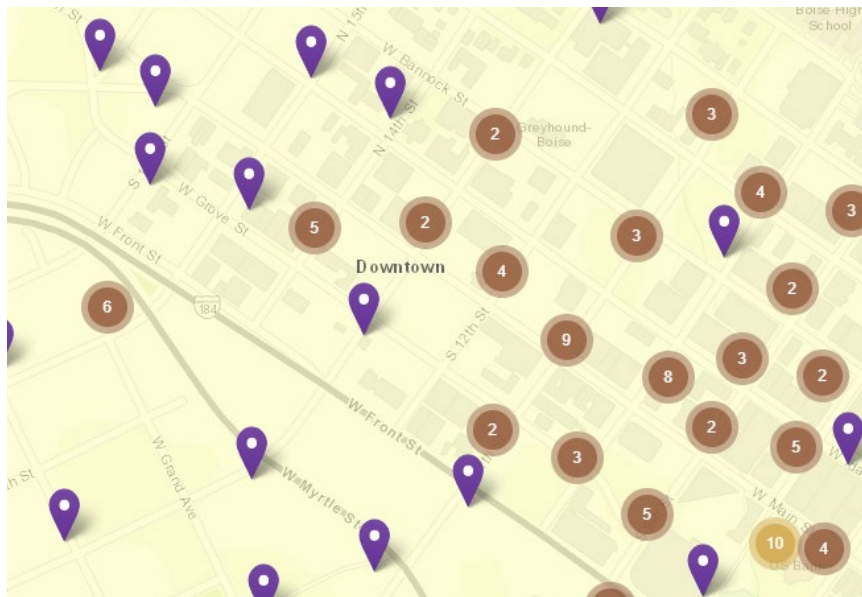
The City of Boise's Department of Arts and History maintains an inventory of public artworks, historical assets, and places of significance. The project area is home to dozens of inventoried assets, a majority of which are traffic box wraps. Additional interpretive art investments are located in and near the Grove Plaza, the Linen Building, Rhodes Skatepark and just outside of the project boundary to the southwest.

Prominent features include:

- Grove Street Illuminated and Boise Canal by Amy Westover.
- Bike Trio by Michael Brown & Cole.
- Wonder Tree by Reham Aarti
- Rotating art installations on the Linen Building Fence featuring permanently mounted frames
- Eight Traffic box wraps by various artists.

Figure 10. Arts and Cultural Inventory Map (excerpt)

Explore the map online at <https://www.boiseartsandhistory.org/explore/map/#/search>



Grove Street Illuminated and Boise Canal by Amy Westover



Bike Trio by Michael Brown & Cole



Rotating Art Panel on Grove Street in the Linen Blocks

## Historic Research and Themes

The history of the western blocks of Boise’s Grove Street illuminates much of the city’s history with themes that echo across the nation’s story. Grove Street, which was included in the original plat for the City of Boise, stretches between 3rd and 17th streets with a distinct neighborhood known in recent years as the Linen Blocks on the western end between 9th and 17th. Named for the laundries that historically characterized the street, the Linen Blocks have changed dramatically over time from a residential neighborhood which housed a diverse mix of residents – including many immigrants – to a light industrial zone hosting businesses oriented to the nearby rail line and boarding houses to shelter the working class. The themes of light industry, temporary housing, transportation, and immigrants and the working-class dominate the street’s history.

Figure 11. SHRA Summary of Historic Themes





## Theme 1: Light Industry

Light industry began to appear on western Grove Street after the Oregon Short Line built a depot at 10<sup>th</sup> and Front Streets in 1895, just one block off Grove. Machine shops, creameries, blacksmith shops, and wagon sheds appeared along the street, interspersed with the residences that still dominated the streetscape, and a few hotels for the tourists who arrived by rail. Grove Street's gradual decline of residences was part of the city's larger transition to a commercially focused sector, as middle-class residents moved to the outskirts of town. Retail shops and buildings popped up around homes, with a veterinary hospital and entertainment spaces like the Orpheum Theater – which played Vaudeville productions well into the first quarter of the century – moved into the space.<sup>1</sup>

The Linen Blocks take their name from the multiple laundries – both Chinese and white-owned – that occupied the buildings in this stretch of Grove Street in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Chinese laundries were on Grove Street's eastern stretches near Boise's historic Chinatown, while the blocks further west housed the American Laundry Company, which constructed the building known today as the Linen Building in 1910. It sits at the northwest corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Grove, and originally included a large adjacent warehouse to its west. The American Laundry Company operated out of the building for 70 years before abandoning it in 1980. Similarly, the Troy Laundry Company arrived on Grove ca. 1910 and set up shop on the northeast corner of Grove and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The facilities included electric power and irons in addition to a sorting room, and by 1950 the company constructed an addition to house a full-sized steam laundry, an office, a dry cleaner, and a fur vault.<sup>2</sup> These industrial laundries frequently hired women to do the work; several women living nearby listed “laundress” as their profession near the turn of the century.

As the automobile became ubiquitous, numerous businesses arose on Grove Street to cater to the new mode of transportation. Prior to WWI, a few businesses on Grove Street serviced horses, wagons, carriages, and even streetcars, but in time they were replaced with auto repair shops, service shops, gas and oil stations, parking garages, and used car lots. The Troy Laundry Company shared its building with three auto-related businesses by the mid-1960s and left the area after 1970. By 1949, cars represented the economic base of the Linen Blocks.<sup>3</sup>



Tire shop on Grove St. 1920, Photo courtesy of the Idaho State Archives

<sup>1</sup> “Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho,” 1912, Sheet 48.

<sup>2</sup> “Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho,” 1912, Sheet 37. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho* (Sanborn Map Company, 1949), Sheet 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho* (Sanborn Map Company, 1949), Sheets 37, 43, 48, 54.

## Theme 2: Temporary Housing, Boarding Houses and Hotels

The Linen Blocks was a residential neighborhood during the city's earliest years; both blue-collar workers and white-collar professionals from other states as well as foreign nations called Grove Street home. Single-family dwellings dominated the streetscape from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, with growth pushing westward from Grove's terminus on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.<sup>4</sup> The dwellings varied dramatically, ranging from modest, single-story homes to massive, Victorian-style mansions that occupied half of a city block and contained large gardens and lush, mature trees.<sup>5</sup>

C.W. Moore constructed one of those large mansions in the Second Empire style, complete with a Mansard roof, detailed brickwork, and lush grounds, at 807 Grove Street in 1879. After he moved his family to a large home on Warm Springs Avenue, a Dutch sea captain named Joseph R. DeLamar purchased the property in 1892 and donated it to the Arid Club, which entertained military officers from nearby Fort Boise and members of the U.S. Geological Survey, shortly afterward. By 1912, the home became a boarding house, and the DeLamar home served as one of Boise's most notable Basque boarding houses until it was demolished in the early 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

As Grove Street evolved over the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a more industry-focused area and middle- and upper-class families moved to the suburbs outside of Boise's city center, the street's human complexion changed. Temporary lodgers became the primary residents on the street, with unmarried immigrants from southern and eastern Europe moving onto Grove in large numbers. Working-class families frequently rented one of their own rooms to the newcomers. What had once been stately mansions housing well-to-do families became boarding houses for the working class. Many residential hotels catered to the local Basque community, such as the Blue Bird, Del Rio, and Eagle establishments. The Basques maintained a strong cultural presence on Grove Street, and the boarding houses served as community spaces to celebrate events and holidays before the 1951 construction of the Basque Center at 6<sup>th</sup> and Grove Streets.<sup>7</sup> Some also catered to young single women who were part of the downtown work force. By 1949, the eastern end of the Linen Blocks was devoid of single-family homes, and those homes that remained on Grove Street west of 12<sup>th</sup> Street housed single, working-class renters.<sup>8</sup> As increasing numbers of businesses moved into the area, the employees of those businesses were commuters from other parts of town.



DeLamar Boarding House and Hotel, Photo courtesy of the Idaho State Archives

<sup>4</sup> "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho," January 1893; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho* (Sanborn Map Company, 1912), Sheet 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho* (Sanborn Map Company, 1912), Sheet 37.

<sup>6</sup> "Presentation by Save the Old Buildings Association to the Boise Redevelopment Agency," May 16, 1967, 3, CCDC Collection - Box 002 - MS053/001.003 Block 43-45, MS053/001.004 Block 52-53, MS053/001.005 Miscellaneous Appraisals, Folder: "003: Preservation of Historic Buildings," Boise City Archives; "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho," 1912, Sheet 48.

<sup>7</sup> "[Untitled]," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, December 31, 1946, p8; "Yule Parties Start Early for Boiseans," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, December 22, 1947, 8; "Basque Dance Slated," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, January 10, 1948, 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho* (Sanborn Map Company, 1949), Sheets 37, 43, 48, 54.

### **Theme 3: A Transportation Corridor**

Grove Street's location between Main Street to the north and Front Street to the south made it a historically significant transportation corridor by acting as a transition space between a dense retail and residential district along Main Street and the light industrial/commercial sector that fronted the Oregon Short Line Railroad.

The railroad brought goods into and out of downtown Boise and it also moved people back and forth across the Treasure Valley. It impacted the development of Grove Street and attracted working-class people to the neighborhood; railroad baggagemen, railroad conductors, dishwashers, barbers, and tailors all lived along Grove Street near the train depot during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, working in nearby industries.

The streetcar's arrival in downtown Boise also facilitated changes to the fabric of Grove Street. Easy transportation from outlying areas encouraged middle- and upper-class residents to move away from the noise, crowds, and smells of the city to quieter homes in the suburbs to the north and east of downtown. Between WWI and WWII Boise's urban core became increasingly denser and poorer as wealthier Boiseans commuted to work from outside the city center and representation on Grove Street skewed heavily toward the working class.

### **Theme 4: Immigrants and the Working Class**

Immigrants moved to Boise from all over Europe in the early days of Grove Street, including large numbers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany/Prussia, Ireland, England, Spain, and Italy. They also came from Turkey (referred to as "Asia Minor" in census records). Many immigrants settled in Boise permanently, such as the Andregg family. John Andregg, a miner born in Ohio to Swiss immigrants, and his German spouse Mary, moved to Boise around the turn of the century with the couple's ten children. The family lived in a modest home near the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Grove.<sup>9</sup>

Chinese immigrants also established a presence on Grove prior to the turn of the century and contributed valuable services to the local economy. For example, Kaw Ming Fong, a middle-aged Chinese man, rented a home at 804 Grove Street and lived there with seven other Chinese men. Fong labored as a handyman, while others living with him worked as a garden laborer and a cook. His three youngest tenants, Foy Lim Fong, Joy Ong Fong, and Dew Ho, labored as ironers and clothes washers, and they may have worked in the Chinese laundry on the corner of South 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Grove.<sup>10</sup>

The makeup of the street changed as the economic base shifted to automobile-related businesses over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As available housing options became increasingly geared toward renters, the street became almost entirely working class; by 1949 the

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<sup>9</sup> "1900 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 4" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1900), digital image, Ancestry.com; "1900 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 6," 1900, digital image, Ancestry.com.

<sup>10</sup> "1900 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 21" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1900), Sheet 9B, digital image, Ancestry.com; "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Boise, Ada County, Idaho," 1912, Sheet 43 and Sheet 48.

percentage of people living in the Linen District who could be considered “working class” approached 99%.<sup>11</sup> Few people along Grove during this time, especially immigrants, received any additional education after graduating high school, and many labored as mechanics, truck drivers, dish washers, and even Works Progress Administration workers.<sup>12</sup>

### Historic Themes Summary

As more people lived precarious lives as renters in the Linen Blocks, the area came to be perceived as “blighted.” Fewer people spent time on the street and a lack of watchful neighbors contributed to a steady increase in crime. The *Idaho Statesman* reported arrests for vagrancy, prostitution (particularly at the Oregon Rooms at 816 ½ Grove Street), public intoxication, and armed robbery regularly between 1930 and the early 1970s.<sup>13</sup> A declining public opinion of the area led to its large-scale destruction in the 1960s and 1970s during the era of urban renewal. In 1966, local leaders received funds from the federal government to revitalize downtown’s entire Central Business District (CBD), including the stretch of Grove Street from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>. They hoped to turn the chaotic, dilapidated area into a beautiful, thoughtfully planned retail center.<sup>14</sup> The Boise Redevelopment Agency targeted the Linen Blocks first: a bulldozer flattened 82% of the existing properties in the area by 1973.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, the plans for a retail center and mall in downtown never materialized, and financial difficulties rendered the Linen Blocks a no-man’s land awaiting redevelopment until the early 21st century. Today, local entrepreneurs like David Hale, who acquired the Linen Building in the early 2000s and renovated it after it sat idle for two decades, have brought some life back into the Linen Blocks. Hale demolished an adjacent building, cleaned up toxic chemical and diesel fuel tanks, and dubbed the building the “Linen Building.” Today, CCDC is following in the street’s long history of adaptive reuse and mixed use to breathe new life into the Linen District.



Pigeon Hole Parking Structure, photo courtesy of the Idaho State Archives

<sup>11</sup> “1940 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 1-6,” Sheets 2A, 3A, 3B, 4A, 61A, 61B, 62A, 81A, 81B, 83A, and 84A; “1940 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 1-16A” (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940), Sheets 61B, 81A, and 81B, digital image, Ancestry.com; “1940 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 1-16B” (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940), Sheets 12A, 12B, 13A, 13B, 61A, and 61B, digital image, Ancestry.com.

<sup>12</sup> “1940 U.S. Census Population Schedule - Boise, Ada County, Idaho, Enumeration District No. 1-6,” Sheet No. 81B.

<sup>13</sup> “[Untitled],” *Idaho Statesman*, July 26, 1935, 13; “[Untitled],” *Idaho Statesman*, November 19, 1937, 6; “Women Arrested,” *Idaho Statesman*, May 14, 1941, 3.

<sup>14</sup> “Financial Background and History of Urban Renewal in Boise, Idaho,” December 4, 1981, 3, MSS 250, Boise Redevelopment Agency documents, 1974-1989, Boise State University Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>15</sup> “Boise Redevelopment Agency Timeline 1965-1984,” 1984 1965, MSS 250, Boise Redevelopment Agency documents, 1974-1989, Boise State University Special Collections and Archives.

### 3. Initial Stakeholder Outreach

Stakeholder engagement conducted as part of initial fact-finding entailed:

- Key Informant Interviews (17 interviewees)
- Developer and Property Owner Conversations (9 individuals)
- Business Door-Knocking and Survey (25 responses)

#### **Key Informant Interviews**

To the right is the list of key stakeholders that participated in an interview during the preliminary scoping phase of work. The preliminary list of interviewees was generated through an analysis of private and public property owners within or immediately adjacent to the project area; public entities with jurisdiction over or providing services to the area; and citizen or business interest groups focused on downtown.

Each interviewee was provided a general overview of the project concept and asked about their interests and investment or development intent within the project area. The intent of the interviews was to conduct fact-finding about the project area and gauge general interest in conducting a collaborative visioning process for the area.

Interviewees were invited to participate in future collaborative visioning work sessions. All interviewees have expressed willingness and interest in participating. These small group work sessions are part of a fuller outreach process that will include opportunities for the public to engage in and influence the visioning for this area.

#### **Interviews**

##### **Ada County Highway District**

Ryan Head, *Planning and Program Manager*

##### **City of Boise**

Deanna Dupuy, *Comprehensive Planning*

Jennifer Tomlinson, *Parks and Recreation, Parks Superintendent*

Trevor Kesnor, *Parks and Recreation, Planner*

Karl LeClair, *Department of Arts and History*

*Public Art Program Manager*

##### **Idaho Transportation Department**

Cecilia Arritola, *Senior Transportation Planner*

Margaret Harvey, *Senior Transportation Planner*

##### **Valley Regional Transit**

Stephen Hunt, *Development Director*

##### **Downtown Neighborhood Association**

Jennifer Mauk, *President*

##### **West Downtown Neighborhood**

Nicole Windsor, *President*

##### **LED**

Lauren Edson, *Director*

Angel Abaya, *Program Director*

##### **Modern Hotel**

Elizabeth Tullis, *Owner*

##### **Treafort Music Festival**

Eric Gilbert, *Festival Director*

Izze Rumpe, *Artfort Program Director*

Megan Stoll, *Marketing Director*

##### **Private Property Owners**

## **Interview Summaries**

### **CITY of BOISE**

#### *Confirmed public partner*

City of Boise interview highlights were grouped around three focus areas:

- Parking
  - City would generally like to see conversion of land use from surface parking as much as possible.
  - Metered parking will be extended to this area when the demand for short-term parking increases.
  - Parking pattern should be urban rather than suburban (e.g., on street or in structured parking rather than in business-front parking areas).
- Streets and Bike/Ped:
  - Redesign Grove Street to include more street trees, improve pedestrian and bicyclist movement, add infrastructure and mobility enhancements. Particular areas in need of investments include:
    - connection to the Grove Plaza.
    - along and across 15th and 16th streets
    - at intersection of Grove, 17th and Main.
- Placemaking and Design
  - Preserve existing valuable trees, adding significantly to the tree canopy.
  - Support taller buildings in this area as well as housing
  - Create something unique to downtown and the community – potential focus for placemaking could include building on existing themes, activities, “vibe” already in the area. Prioritize things like light industrial uses, makers space, public market and a business incubation zone. Include a cultural/artistry “hub” with a creative center and art-based businesses.
  - Already many parks and public spaces in this area – focus on connecting existing spaces and activities better, using street for public gathering space when needed.

## **TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS**

#### *Confirmed Partners*

- This area has been identified as part of the low-stress bikeway connecting Fairview to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- ACHD is in the process of developing performance measures to review the appropriateness of bike infrastructure. Emphasis has been on raised or protected bike lanes in order to ensure people feel comfortable with the proposed options.
- There are ADA improvements needed on many sidewalks and at select crossings.

- Addressing barriers to movement between activity centers is a top priority, some potential improvements could include
  - Improving the 9th Street Crossing that connects the Grove Plaza to Grove Street.
  - 11<sup>th</sup> to Front St. connecting to JUMP
  - Intersections at 15<sup>th</sup> St. and Grove St., and 16<sup>th</sup> St. and Grove St.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS**

### *Confirmed Partners*

- The neighborhood associations are excited to assist with this process and will be a primary avenue for connecting with area residents.
- The best way to connect with neighborhood residents is through full color and bright postcard mailers. Make sure to mention that all renters and homeowners are encouraged to participate. Social media and flyers are tertiary means of connecting with residents.
- The project area provides a great diversity of businesses and has an eclectic and fun character. This area feels like its own little neighborhood.
- The area should keep an industrial feel but with cleaned-up buildings and additional gathering spaces.

## **TREEFORT MUSIC FEST**

### *Confirmed Partner*

- Desires a large, private, open, unstructured space for ticketed outdoor venue and roller rink.
- Would like to see investments build on the authentic makers, creative spaces, businesses, and activities already in the area.
- Key elements for success are things like wider sidewalks, power sources, outdoor dining, late night food/window walk-ups/food trucks, etc.
- Workspace and housing within reach of artists (and no elevators), gallery and factory/warehouse space.

## **ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### *Confirmed Partner*

- Making the area generally more pedestrian-friendly is a high priority.
- This is a little “edgier” area and would like to see the feel of the district remain true to that vibe.
- Lots of business-to-business collaboration is happening to attract activity (example: Yule Walk and other quarterly events, Treefort, etc.). Focus on how the vision can support what is already happening and allow more of that to be created.
- Branding support for this area is needed to create more of a district identity.

- More activation/activity at evening and weekend times would help boost the area – want to create a place where people can find something to do for a half day, full day, at all times of the day.
- The idea of a space for events and performance (possibly outdoors) is of interest to this group.
- The design and look of the buildings has a real impact on the feeling – “beige buildings” without a distinct character that matches and contributes to the district are not helpful development. How can design be more intentional and accountable?
- Cruising, threatening and disruptive behavior on Idaho and Main is damaging to businesses in this area and should be a priority issue addressed.

#### **PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS**

##### *Potential for private investment and partnership projects*

- Additional, close-by parking is needed to maximize the area’s potential for attracting pedestrians to businesses or future redevelopments. Property owners are open to structuring a parking agreement with CCDC or another public entity that would replace or consolidate surface parking.
- Utility relocations could be a redevelopment hurdle on a site-by-site basis.
- Excited for the study area’s potential to add and support a variety of active uses, such as residential, office/retail, etc. Future programs like the 11th Street Bikeway will help bring traffic and awareness to the area.
- Desire to add housing options that serve both the neighborhood’s residents and nearby areas of activities. Study area can support a diverse range of housing options, such as for-sale and for-rent, market and below-market rates, single family and multi-family and mixed-use.
- Connectivity to the surrounding areas and neighborhoods is important, whether it is Downtown, the West End, or West Downtown.
- Current streetscapes are piecemeal and not uniform. This can affect attracting pedestrians and ‘window-shoppers’ to the area.
- Will take advantage of any CCDC Participation Program incentives for Public Improvements (streetscapes, public spaces, public art, etc.) for any future work if it fits the district timing.

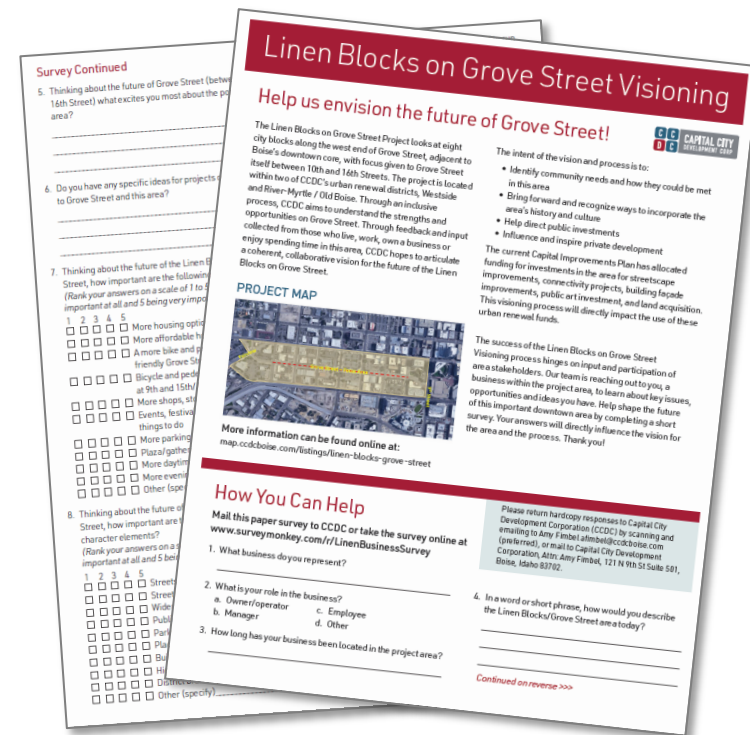


## Initial Business Outreach

To capture a broader representation of area stakeholders the Linen Blocks planning team developed a 15-question survey that was distributed to local area businesses through on the ground door-to-door promotion. The intent of the survey and door knocking effort was to directly connect with local businesses to make them aware of the visioning effort and subsequent planning public investments as well as learn about businesses' challenges, opportunities and priorities that could be addressed through the project. The business survey and related outreach took place between February and March 2021 and received 25 responses – representing approximately one third of the businesses in the focus area.

## Business Survey and Interview Highlights and Themes

- **Strengthen District Identity** – Businesses would generally like to see a more cohesive, consistent branding and identity.
- **Changing/Transitional Uses** – Over time, business has shifted away from light industrial and toward a mix of retail and restaurants.
- **Recognized Potential** – Many respondents indicated that the area was blooming with potential to become a prominent destination and active space in downtown Boise. The unique character of the area combined with parcels that are undeveloped or underutilized (surface parking lots, vacant buildings, gaps of activation between hubs of activity) is a key part of the potential.
- **Parking Complications** – The area suffers from limited parking and many motorists using the street for its extended long-term (often free) parking and then visiting other parts of downtown. The existing unmetered parking structure does benefit many of the businesses and employees.
- **Collaboration Between Businesses** – Respondents indicated interest in building and strengthening partnerships and planning shared programming to help attract more people to the area.
- **Potential project ideas supported by business respondents:**
  - District Branding and Marketing Campaign
  - Open Market Space (indoor or outdoor)
  - More retail, bars and restaurants, night life
  - Green spaces
  - Improved sidewalks and bike lanes



## 4. Development Potential and Considerations

### CCDC Strategies

CCDC operates under five key strategies that will help define potential development and projects in this area. The key strategies are:

1. **Economic Development** – Cultivate commerce and grow resilient, diversified, and prosperous local economies.
2. **Infrastructure** – Improve public infrastructure to attract new investment and encourage best use of property.
3. **Mobility** – Expand mobility choices that include parking and multiple transit modes to enable universally accessible urban districts.
4. **Placemaking** – Develop public spaces and energized environments where a blend of cultures and concentrated mix of uses create a valued sense of place.
5. **Special Projects** – Invest in projects that respond to emerging revitalization opportunities including public amenities, historic preservation, and support of local arts and culture.



Idaho Street Townhomes. Photo credit - Guy Hand 2018

### Potential Projects

Below is an initial list of identified desires and needs for the area that could be addressed through this project:

- Unstructured, privately-managed, inexpensive plaza space that is adaptably programmable throughout the year
- Street trees and wider sidewalks
- A mix of housing and more housing projects, generally. This could include artist live workspace/lofts that are lower-cost affordable and/or housing with nearby creative and maker space that has no/low barriers to use
- Daytime and “night life” uses such as food stalls/public market
- More bike/ped-friendly facilities on Grove and crossings at 9th and 15th/16th
- Utilize fire station redesign to contribute to district feeling
- Additional public art/space for temporary, rotating art
- Smaller scale public gathering spaces
- Invest in district branding and marketing
- Retain historic buildings, elements, and light industrial uses

## **Areas of Opportunity**

The Linen Blocks on Grove present many areas of opportunity. The list below enumerates aspects of a placemaking and reinvestment strategy for this area that should be considered through and can be influenced by a collaborative visioning process. These are categorized below as considerations that build “feel” for the area, and elements that contribute to better “function.”

### **Feel**

1. *District identity* – Articulating a consistent, meaningful feeling, look and atmosphere that redevelopment should cohere around, and that differentiates the area from other downtown places.
2. *Historical and cultural interpretation* – Identifying who, how and what stories and elements should be celebrated.
3. *Programming* – Accommodating and encouraging various types of behaviors, activities, and events.
4. *Design* – viewsheds and line of sight, landscaping and building form and design principles.

### **Function**

5. *Infrastructure investments* – Inclusion of drainage and stormwater mitigation, underground utilities, electric vehicle charging stations and other infrastructural improvements to encourage development.
6. *Mobility and circulation* – Expanding Bike BOI, incorporating low-stress bikeway, ensuring circulation connects with other key pathways and routes in downtown, car parking management and facilities.
7. *Public spaces* – Street space and character, as well as park, plaza or other public space amenities and improvements.
8. *Activities and Uses* – Identifying types and locations for desired uses, building types, and converting surface parking to other uses.

The map on the following page illustrates some of the current and potential projects and areas of opportunity within the Linen Blocks on Grove area.

## Current and Potential Projects Map



### Projects Influenced by this Process

- A. Linen Blocks - 10<sup>th</sup> Street to 16<sup>th</sup> Street \$5,400,000 FY22
- B. Treefort Footprint Public Art - 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> \$155,000 FY22
- C. Eyes of the World Public Art – 16<sup>th</sup> and Grove \$75,000 FY22
- D. Empty Sign Public Art – 15<sup>th</sup> and Grove \$15,000 FY22  
\$15,000 FY22

### Additional Streetscape and Connectivity Projects

- E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street Streetscape and Connectivity \$4,500,000 FY22
- F. 15<sup>th</sup> Street Streetscape and Connectivity \$450,000 FY22

### Completed Projects

- G. Owyhee Place \$1,500,000 FY14
- H. Fire Fusion Studio Streetscape \$50,000 FY20
- I. Pioneer Crossing Mixed-Use \$9,700,000 FY18
- J. Verraso Apartments \$150,000 FY18

### Other Potential Funding Sources and Investments

- Property Acquisition
- Participation Program
- Mobility and Parking Investments

## What's Next?

With the basis of the preliminary findings catalogued here, further steps in the Visioning process will proceed:

- Convene stakeholders for a series of visioning work sessions to share information and background about the project area and to discuss and evaluate the “Areas of Opportunity” topics, above;
- Expand the visioning process to the general public and any additional key stakeholders identified;
- Incorporate additional ideas and input into the final Vision Report that will be referenced and guide the next phases of the placemaking and redevelopment strategy.



Visioning team starting street tour of the project area, starting at Grove Street Plaza