

## **State of the City Address**

**Presented by Mayor Tammy de Weerd**

***March 23, 2006, 4:00 p.m.  
Mountain View High School  
Meridian, Idaho***

### INTRODUCTIONS

[Click here to listen to the Address on-line](#)

Right off the top I'd like to acknowledge the debut of the City of Meridian's new combined Meridian Police and Fire Honor Guard. The pride they take in what they do, their dignity and patriotism, should inspire us all. This was their first public appearance, and I'm sure they'll be a welcome addition to many community events in the future.

I'd also like to thank Stake President Glen Olsen for his uplifting message of hope, wisdom and strength; which is so greatly comforting.

Our presenting sponsor Wells Fargo Bank also deserves special thanks. Their high level of community involvement and willingness to support programs and events in our community place them in a league of their own.

And of course our thanks go out to the Meridian Chamber of Commerce - to its officers, board of directors, and staff, Teri, Laurel and Shannon. Their efforts give us the opportunity to showcase the City of Meridian.

Let me acknowledge our partners for progress - Meridian's Leadership Team, who take on every challenge and believe so strongly in this City. Please stand up to be recognized and we'll hold our applause until everyone has been introduced:

City Council President Shaun Wardle  
Council Vice President Joe Borton  
Councilman Keith Bird  
Councilman Charlie Rountree

Public Works Director Brad Watson  
City Clerk Will Berg  
Police Chief Bill Musser  
Finance Director Stacy Kilchenmann  
Parks and Recreation Director Doug Strong  
Planning and Zoning Director Anna Canning  
Fire Chief Ron Anderson  
City Attorney Bill Nary

I would also like to thank all those who have participated on a City Commission, Committee, Task Force or volunteered in any way for the City.

I would especially like to thank my family for being here – my husband Jan, as well as Bart, Tara, RoAnne, and Janelle, for being there every moment and supporting me at every step. Family support is extremely important; let me recognize a couple of our Councilman’s wives as well, Marge Bird and Nancy Rountree. Thank you for sharing your partners.

Most of all let me thank all our City employees. Please stand. The growth of our city is unequalled in this state. And, as you will soon hear, our employees’ efforts -- and their actions -- cannot be matched. We honor you today -- you work diligently on our behalf, to make our city a premiere place to live, work, and raise a family.

We’ve been given three missions. As the Mayor of the City, I’m going to need your help. So I hereby commission each of you as “special agents” --- agents of progress... agents of opportunity... and agents of responsibility.

Together we can achieve the Mission Possible.

**Mission One... should you choose to accept it... is to Celebrate Progress;** the progress and achievements that have brought us here today.

There are several kinds of cities in America – cities whose best days are behind them; cities that have reached their peak, and are now losing business and jobs.

Then there are cities like Meridian – cities whose best days are ahead of them -- Cities where tomorrow will be better than today; cities where residents ask ‘what’s next?’ instead of ‘what now?’

Meridian is moving to that next level – we are moving full steam ahead...from

‘blueprint’ to ‘showcase.’ My friends, the state of our City is strong.

We’ve gathered here this afternoon in Mountain View High School’s performing arts auditorium – Thanks to Fred Shaddick and his Mtn. View students for our Mission “Possible” antics a few moments ago.

## **MERIDIAN IS ABOUT CHOICES**

This area is exploding with jobs, entertainment and culture.

This very facility hosts our community’s finest symphony – the Meridian Symphony Orchestra... 75 members strong.

It will also host New Heritage Theatre’s productions; the first program will begin next week. The Meridian School District recently formed a unique partnership, bringing professional ‘theatre arts’ with New Heritage that will benefit the district and our community.

Across Overland, our residents now can choose what movie they want to see at the Majestic Theater’s 18 screen facility.

Just east of here in El Dorado and Silverstone Business Parks you can find 6000 plus jobs, in 2.3 M square feet of class A business space.

In this area, south of I-84 from our most easterly border to the Meridian Kuna Highway, south to Victory – we not only have choices of jobs; we have choices in entertainment, medical treatment, financial institutions, even college degrees – choices of housing from large acre estates to mid-sized lots, from patio homes or apartments to senior living...all protected by Meridian’s newest Fire Station #4. This is just a snapshot -- we see similar choices and benefits of growth, citywide – for young and old alike.

These choices are a great example of progress in Meridian – and they are essential to keeping our young people here in our community. We are working to provide them with new options.

We are focusing our economic development for positive growth, creating opportunities and quality jobs; to keep our young, our talented, and our future. We are taking a proactive role in coordinating actions with the Boise Valley Economic Partnership, the Meridian Chamber and Meridian Development Corporation to reach this goal.

Our young are restless, restless for change, restless for opportunities; they go

where energy abounds and progress is evident.

We continue to move forward to nurture and create jobs within our existing and expanding business community while targeting new high quality business ventures for the future. We want our young and talented to share the possibilities of these efforts.

This contemporary generation – more than any other – wants choices. Those choices and opportunities expand every day in Meridian... in jobs, services, entertainment, and housing.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Over the last 5 years, Meridian has added over 6 million square feet of commercial, industrial, and office space which has doubled our commercial taxable value. This has helped diversify our historically residential-only tax base to provide for additional safety services.

We have seen national restaurant chains come to Meridian such as: Red Robin, Carrabba's, and Tony Roma's; joining our home town favorites of Louie's, Kahootz, and Epi's. We have Marshalls, Craft Warehouse, Lowes and a new Double D, and 'coming soon' Kohl's Department Store, Sierra Trading Post – a 25,000 sq. ft. facility, and a 40,000 sq. ft. Harley Davidson 'Retail-tainment' Center.

Businesses are adding jobs and/or expanding in Meridian because of our central location and welcoming economic environment; such as, Food Services of America, Micro 100, Blue Cross of Idaho, IEC-AmeriBen, and Boondocks. They are growing alongside businesses that call Meridian their Corporate Headquarters; Jacksons Food Stores, Crucial.com, Western States Equipment, United Heritage, Computrol, and MWI Veterinary Supply. All are strong employers and partners in our community.

Saint Luke's and Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Centers are committed civic allies and provide critical services to our growing community.

Our Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments are very busy working on promoting new quality design for Meridian; we are turning it up a notch. We have been refining policies and ordinances to encourage a mix of uses and housing choices.

We have seen subdivisions such as Settlers Bridge, Saguaro Canyon, Lochsa Falls, Paramount, Tuscany and Meadow Lake Village – a senior living 'mixed

use' community. Each has open space, community centers, and style.

Joining El Dorado and Silverstone as business parks to be noted with distinction are: Fairview Lakes, Central Valley Business Park, and the 'emerging' Pinebridge Business Campus. Pinebridge will indeed provide a bridge from Eagle Road to downtown by connecting Pine Street. Thank you Dennis Baker and Dan Torfin. We anticipate the development within this project will provide high quality places to live, work and shop within our City. You are raising the bar – and setting the tone for downtown.

We continue to see innovative architectural design in buildings such as Farmers & Merchants State Bank in old town, United Heritage in Central Valley Corporate Park, the unique architectural style of offices in Heritage Commons and Bridgetower.

Our new Unified Development Codes, Downtown Design Standards, and our streamlined building permits, benefit the investment and development process. Majestic Theatre owner, Ray Hallet, is still amazed at the time frame the City met with his 18-screen project that from 'blueprint to grand opening' was done in 28 weeks. Setting the standards high, together we made it happen.

There is more to the city's tag line – 'Built for Business, Designed for Living' than just talk. We are achieving it every day.

Building a community from 'Blueprint to Showcase' is also more than just talk, it's walking the walk. We must be good stewards of the public trust...we must plan and grow responsibly. Let me recap some of the innovations and efficiencies that our city departments have brought to our community over this last year.

## **DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS**

As our City's C.E.O., I stay busy running to keep up with our talented Department Directors. I am so honored to work with this team of professionals – they make my job easy. I must admit, though, my favorite line in each of their job descriptions is the phrase, 'and other duties as assigned by the Mayor.'

They are progressive and forward thinking – and can leap tall buildings in a single bound. We have worked over the past two years to align and position internally; focusing on developing efficiency, effective communication, and accountability. Meridian has consolidated functions in several areas allowing

better oversight and functionality.

### **City Attorney / HR / IT Departments**

In our City Attorney / HR Department, which also includes IT, we have implemented a Wireless Area Network for department-to- department communication – a huge plus when our departments are spread all over the city!

We have implemented an employee accountability program citywide – we now have position accountability ‘work programs’ for every position that integrates our strategic focus areas, mission, values, job descriptions into job expectations with benchmarks and milestones. This will result in higher levels of efficiency and productivity with clearer staff direction. This is a tremendous tool!

### **Finance Department**

Our Office of Financial Management and Planning has reorganized to better accommodate growth. We process more than 500 property title changes each month – and have seen an increase in our utility accounts of 17% this last year.

We believe in transparency in our budget and financial planning process. We are serious about planning for our future. We have a 20 year enterprise fund capital improvement plan and a 10 year general fund capital improvement plan. These documents, and other budget details, can be found on the city website.

### **City Clerk’s Office**

In the City Clerk’s office, they manage mountains of paper and received over 21,000 phone calls annually. They also issue and process all the license and permits for the city.

This office does all the public noticing and word-for-word minutes for our Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission; and support for other citizen committees as well. City Council met 76 times and the Planning and Zoning Commission met 30 times this last year. This is a huge time commitment! Especially consider that the P&Z meetings, more often than not, run past midnight. We would like to thank the Commissioners for their tremendous time commitment – we appreciate all you do!

### **Planning Department**

Our Planning Department was awarded the Association of Cities 'City Achievement' recognition for our Process Improvement Group or P.I.G.; a group of stakeholders who helped the city develop our Unified Development Code; raising the standards and expectations of development.

The goal for development is to identify concerns and find solutions before they get to the City Council. This is done through the use of pre-application conferences, meetings with other city departments to identify concerns, early and consistent coordination with the applicant and ACHD, and neighborhood meeting requirements.

The recently adopted North Meridian comprehensive plan raised the level of planning; weighing and balancing land uses, identifying mid-mile neighborhood connectors, and protection of transportation corridors.

### **Public Works Department**

Our Public Works – which includes city engineering, building, water and sewer – has been very busy, not only working with growth but building and planning for the future. 'Planning years' have taken on a new dimension in this department. What was planned for ten years out is being built in five. Planning continues to be a priority.

Engineering. Plan review quality has not and will not suffer; the long-term consequences are too important for the health of our community. We are committed to saving time in our process; and now have a permit tracking system in place. Our GIS is fully operational to provide quicker and more complete facility information internally and to the public. All water/sewer inspectors are equipped with GPS units to record location of pipelines being installed; which is then recorded in GIS.

Approximately 45 miles of water and nearly 31 miles of sewer line have been completed by the development community and the city this year; with 51 miles of water and 40 of sewer planned for 2006, all to serve growth and improve service to existing development. Our greatest challenge is building necessary infrastructure with increasing costs, overburdened contractors and material shortages.

Water. We have implemented a radio water-read program to reduce labor costs and speed the billing process. We added three wells; maintaining our ability to accommodate growth. Residents are using less potable water per capita, in fact 12% less than in 2004, assisting us in conserving this valuable resource.

Wastewater. The first phase of an \$18 million sewer expansion project began in October; the second phase in June to serve up to 90,000 residents. Staff will complete by the end of 2006, a facility plan meeting the needs of 150,000 residents.

Our treatment facility is recognized for its quality operations. Our facility had 'zero' Pollutant Discharge violations; while treating in excess of 1.5 billion gallons of sewage. This equals 75 gallons of sewage per day for every person living in Meridian! We also received the Pacific NW Clean Water Association Safety Award. Goes to show we take our job of quality serious. Our greatest challenges have been positioning to meet new regulatory demands without knowing treatment targets and timelines from the EPA.

Building/Development Services. We completed 47,800 inspections in 2005. This is important as it equates to the long-term health and building safety of our community. In September, the Process Improvement Group – II was convened to examine the commercial building process resulting in: pre-application meetings to discuss the technical issues of commercial or Tenant Improvement ('TI') projects; time savings in the Certificate of Occupancy signature procedure; and implementation of an Early Start program and improved TI process.

I would like to thank members of the PIG II from the City of Meridian Brad Watson, Bruce Freckleton, Karie Glenn, Brent Bjornson, Len Grady, and Cheryl Brown – and then from the community -- Mike Huttash, The Russell Corp., Jonathan Seel, WH Moore Co. , Jerry Frank, Petra, Inc. Lynn Brown, Lyn Brown Architect, Steve Pardew, BRS Architects, Greg Patrick, Treasure Valley Fire Protection, Roger Smith, Pinnacle Engineers, Matt Smith, Smith-Brighton, and Marv Meyer, The Russell Corp.

Meridian continues to grow; our population totals are estimated by Compass at over 66,600 residents. We issued 3257 residential and 145 commercial building permits. Values were up 36% over the previous year. Meridian posted record building values at \$719 M , followed by Boise at \$555 M and Nampa at \$305. These are not just numbers, however. We make sure the buildings are safe and will last.

Assuring quality service and protecting public health is monumental. We feel our managers and superintendents Len, Bruce, Rick, and John go above and beyond. In their jobs, being unseen and unknown are good things – this means things are being done right. Our environmental responsibilities are taken



seriously; both for today and for our future needs and responsibilities.

## **Parks and Recreation Department**

Quality of life is measured in many ways. Preserving open space and creating public spaces that provide for places to gather and play is a priority for our Parks & Recreation Department.

The challenge of the cost of land and materials is a concern. An example underscoring this concern is the Meridian Youth Baseball complex has come to Council twice for funding adjustments. An additional 71% or \$610,000 was needed, even with value engineering.

We achieve our goals for open space with both public and private dollars. We work with the development community preserving and designing open spaces, and places to gather, in their developments; through a minimum 5% open space requirement. They create opportunities for neighbors-knowing-neighbors by designing pathways, and building private parks and community centers.

The city has been expanding the public parks system; by the end of the summer we will have 166 acres of developed parkland; that's an increase of 75 acres this year. Let me walk through and highlight a few of these projects.

Phase I of Meridian Youth Baseball's eight field complex on the west side of Meridian's Settlers Park, at Ustick and Meridian, will become available in September.

Neighborhood parks - Champion, Kiwanis, and Seasons will come on line over the next three to six months. We just received a 7.5 acre neighborhood park in Messina Meadows from developer, Greg Johnson, that will be developed and then donated to the City later this year worth 1.2 million dollars to the city.

Phase I of Heroes Park, a 30-acre soccer complex in partnership with PAL and located east off Ten Mile and north of McMillan, will be opened by September 2006.

There are 2 particular projects I would like to underscore. One, in memory of a good man and volunteer. The other, a playground that has been a project - a crusade of love; that will achieve another milestone.

The H.R. Bud Porter Pathway was dedicated on January 12, 2006. Bud was a Parks Commissioner who exemplified service, promoted giving back to the community, and had a vision for a pathway system in Meridian. He would have

been please to know that we are working on and will bring a master pathway plan to Council this year. Bud's sons and wife are with us today - thank you for sharing Bud with us. He is missed.

Adventure Island, Idaho's first universally accessible playground now open at Meridian's Settler's Park, has received the attention of Idaho's First Lady Patricia Kempthorne and is the recipient of a 'City Achievement' award by the Association of Idaho Cities. Its newest attraction, the Water Splash Pad, will be complete this summer. Special thanks to Angela Lindig; the master dreamer behind this project.

## **SAFETY SERVICES**

Our Safety Services programs are the greatest reflection of your property tax dollars at work. Police and Fire are funded from 'General Fund' and represent well over 80% of our base operational dollars.

We believe that your tax dollars cannot be better spent. Your personal and property safety are paramount. I am very proud of our men and women in uniform and their department support teams. Let me tell you how they proudly serve the Meridian community.

### **Police Department**

By the end of July, the Meridian Police Department will have 88 employees. This last year we added 11 officers to the department. Our volunteer program accounted for over 3100 hours of time in 2005.

For a city our size, our crime is relatively low. We ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 64 cities in Idaho and stay well below the State's largest cities. We work diligently with our neighboring cities and counties to keep it that way. Meridian is tough on drugs and tough on crime.

We are excited about a number of projects and programs added this past year.

A The new K-9 training facility is near completion. It was made possible by partnerships with Hubble Homes, Zamzows, and a number of other local businesses. This will not only be a law enforcement training facility for police K-9's, it will be Meridian's first off lead facility for the public and their dogs. The City's commitment - \$60,000 for a facility estimated at over \$285,000.

Our animal adoption program was started with volunteers partnering with us helping to improve our dog impound program and facility. They have

experienced a 95% return and adoption rate; they have made a difference!

Our Crime Prevention Program has gained much involvement and momentum; in particular with the National Night Out in August and our new Neighborhood Watch programs. Our neighborhood watch programs have been a great vehicle to get out key information important to the health and safety of our neighborhoods.

Our greatest challenge is in our traffic congestion and collisions. This intersection 'top ten' list is one of those you may want to avoid.

1. Eagle & Fairview
2. Eagle at St. Luke's
3. Eagle & Ustick
4. Meridian & Overland
5. Fairview & Locust Grove
6. Eagle & Franklin
7. Fairview & Records
8. Eagle & Magic View
9. Main & Franklin
10. Eagle & Overland

## **Fire Department**

In Fire, we have achieved three major accomplishments.

We began plans last spring to bring Advanced Life Support (ALS) services to our department – adding a paramedic/firefighter to each of our engine crews. This program began in January, and is a strong statement of our 'commitment to service' to our community.

In May, we opened our Fire Safety Education Center. This center is a state of the art facility that features a sprinkler system demonstration room, a simulated burned-out child's bedroom, as well as a second child's room ducted for smoke and has heated panels in the doors; great for practicing evacuation. This Center is also used to teach cooking safety. We hired our first public education specialist that has been a huge presence in our community and our fire prevention outreach.

Last month, we opened Fire Station #4 south of I-84 – the fourth new station in six years! We are fortunate to have a strong partnership with the Rural Fire District that funded the facility – special thanks to Commissioners Rich Green and Clair Bowman.

Our response time improves every year. With the opening of this station our response times have already improved by 40 seconds!

## Mayor's Office

In addition to my day-to-day operational responsibilities and departmental oversight, the Mayor's Office has a number of initiatives and partnerships worthy of mentioning.

I must also mention that I serve on over 30 committees, commissions and boards; and make countless public appearances and presentations. If I've ever been "missing in action" somewhere you expected me to be, I ask forgiveness.

The Mayor's Office focuses on youth involvement and programs, Economic Development efforts, and recently added our community communications and volunteer position. There's never a dull moment in our office.

Our faith community partnership will once again bring the 'Mayor's Prayer Breakfast' April 5<sup>th</sup> with first Lady, Patricia Kempthorne, as our featured speaker. Last Christmas season, the Christian Churches of the Treasure Valley Association, brought the Grace Gift Parable II - gas for single parents program to Meridian. This was an incredible experience; equally for our police in managing the traffic.

In November, we celebrated our community's Brightest Stars; please note the names on the slide - these are the unsung heroes in Meridian that are the reason we continue to be a great place to live. Would any nominees current and former please stand to be recognized.

Gus Hein, New Heritage Theater, and Jackson Foods Stores were honored by the Governor and our legislators, in January, for their efforts in our communities on behalf of children and families. Jacksons was selected as Idaho's Grand Prize winner in the Corporate category. Thank you, Senator Fulcher for attending this event.

Last year I announced a new operator for our Golf course. Dick Davis and his partners took over the course last Spring, renamed it Lake View Golf Course, and have been making changes ever since. Check it out, the Council and I believe you will be pleased.

The Meridian Senior Center, completed Phase I of the Center's much needed renovations with Community Development Block Grant funds. We have

applied for Community Development funds again this year to help fund the 'Phase II' improvements. These are much needed for the safety of the seniors they serve.

We have convened a focus group that has worked to identify 'uses' for a future community – this is the first step in a very lengthy process of planning and evaluating the feasibility for a community center for Meridian. We hope to see our 'seniors' and 'youth' programs find an adequate facility to serve these growing needs.

Meridian celebrated the return of our troops with the rest of our valley; by displaying the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion flag and the 'all branches of the military' flag citywide. In January, we honored Officer Severson and Calvin Haines to welcome them home. We thank those that serve our country with honor and courage and thank their families for their sacrifices as well.

### **MAYOR'S YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (MYAC)**

At this time, I would like to recognize the two young ladies on stage with us. They represent the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council as President and Vice President – Andrea Dicello and RoAnne de Weerd. Will the other Youth Council members stand to be recognized as well.

The Youth Council was created: to engage the youth in our community in the decision making process and to have the opportunity to have a voice in their future – that their future is choice, not chance. Andrea will share with you some of the activities that Youth Council have been involved with. Please welcome, Andrea.

My name is Andrea Dicello and I am the Chair of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. Although this Council is relatively new, we are putting forth great efforts to show just how dedicated the youth of Meridian are, to their community.

When Mayor De Weerd first became the Mayor of our great city, she made it a top priority to get the youth involved in local politics. Within only a few months, this task was accomplished and in the fall of 2004 the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council was officially established.

This council is composed of students between the ages of 14 and 18, who live or go to school in Meridian. We meet twice a month at the Meridian Police Department to discuss current issues that this city faces.

There have been numerous accomplishments, that the council has taken part in, over the past two years; the first being the establishment of the council's Constitution and bylaws. These bylaws are essentially what guides and keeps our meetings focused and strong.

Another important event occurred last year, which had a great impact upon the city of Meridian and the surrounding community; the event was a canned food drive which was in support for the National Youth Service Day. All of the food that was donated was given to the Idaho Food Bank, so that they could distribute it to those who were often times left with nothing but a feeling of hunger.

Also this year; the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council was able to participate in the 'Meth in Meridian' presentation, which had a turnout of about 400 to 500 people. All of which left the presentation with a greater awareness of just how serious this problem is in our own community.

Currently we are working on a few projects that we, as a council, feel need to be addressed. As we all may know, our children may not eat too healthy because of all the junk food provided in our schools vending machines. This is why the Mayor's Youth Advisory council is avidly working to implement 'Operation Venderlization,' which would bring healthy food choices to our vending machines.

The next goal that we hope to have success with is for this year's National Youth Service Day, which is just around the corner. On this day, the members of this council, as well as other clubs, have decided to 'experience homelessness.' This would entail a 24 hour time period, which would allow for

each individual to go out onto the streets of Meridian to receive donations of money, food, and clothing; which would all be donated to local charities and would help raise awareness for the citizens in our community.

Another aspect that the council is looking to is the drug policies in our local schools. We are gaining constant knowledge and research each day about how our policies work effectively and where they may need a little boost, to make Meridian a much cleaner and safer place to live.

These are just a few of our past accomplishments and future goals however, the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council would not have been able to succeed if we did not have the amazing support from Mayor DeWeerd, Bud Henthorne, and the city of Meridian. Mayor DeWeerd has put in timeless hours to ensure that we have a voice and a guided vision for our community, while Bud has been one of the key factors to keep our group well organized and focused, and the great city of Meridian has been so gracious, so as to look upon us for the answers of the future.

With this stated I would like to thank Mayor DeWeerd and everyone who has been in support of all that this council does, Thank You!

As you can see our future is bright.

Mission Two... should you choose to accept it, is to Seize Opportunity. The opportunity that will propel us and our city to the next level.

## NATIONAL HONORS & RECOGNITION

Combined with the phenomenal efforts of our city departments, our involved

community and regional partners, the Meridian community is the rising star.

The valley as a whole was recognized by Forbes magazine twice – as a best place in the nation to start a high tech firm, and again as #1 for business and careers. Inc. Magazine chose Meridian/Boise as #2 in Best Places to do business. Money Magazine ranked Meridian in the top 75 on its list of the best places in the nation to live. We have been discovered.

We've made tremendous progress in many areas as you have heard in our city departments, especially this last year. Let me touch on a couple of other areas – opportunities - I would like to highlight in more specifics.

## SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

Our relationships with our schools continue to grow from private to public; and from Head Start to community colleges – a concept which we support and would welcome to our community. In my prior life, I worked for Washington State University's Small Business Development Center. We utilized the State of Washington's community college system to provide for small business training and workforce development not only essential to the economic health of the business community, but providing citizens opportunities for affordable education and training. Meridian looks forward to working with institutions of higher education, as we are the population center, as partners in offering exciting and progressive opportunities for the valley.

Our children are a priority. Our District's residents stepped up in support of our schools in a big way – passing a 140 M dollar school bond. We will work side by side with our district to provide for the safety of our students, and assist in planning for growth.

Many people don't realize that City of Meridian students represent only 44% of



the students in the District. The remaining 56% live in Boise, Eagle, Star and the county.

Our relationship with our School District is critical; and we value the job they do. We feel we are partners to their success as they are to ours. Our building department feeds building permit information monthly to the district to help with growth forecasting.

We will continue to advocate for growth to pay its share – through encouraging partnerships, exemplified by several Meridian developers working with the District by pricing land below market value. We have one developer, David Turnbull of Brighton Corporation, who stepped up in a big way and provided a 100% donation of the land for a school the District needed in Paramount Subdivision.

Our Planning staff will continue to work on the facilities planning committee for siting schools and working on tools to pay for improvements such as sidewalks and encouraging public/private partnerships for road or intersections advanced construction.

I value our partnership with the District; many thanks to Dr. Clark, her staff, and the School Board of Trustees. I will share a specific example of our collaborative efforts in my concluding remarks.

## TRANSPORTATION

In transportation, I assure you we have made progress. One of the greatest challenges we have is traffic; not just in Meridian, in the entire Valley. Meridian is blessed and challenged because of our central location. If we were to just pick Meridian up and put us on the valley's fringe we would not have the severity of traffic issues. If Meridian were to stop growing tomorrow, the traffic

numbers would continue to grow because growth is happening in every community, every corner of the valley – and we are the center of it all.

Meridian has dedicated many hours and resources to two major planning activities in the region. Our partners at Compass, Idaho Transportation Department, Ada County Highway District (ACHD), and the cities and counties have covered many important issues this last year. One key outcome from this process is that Meridian carries the valley's cross traffic. The valley transportation needs are enormous and the price tag far exceeds the resources. We simply must find additional funding opportunities; as well as solutions, infrastructure-wise, offering choices in moving people, goods and services. One important example is public transit.

Meridian will see many positive road projects in the near future and over the next several years. When a road project becomes a 'priority'; it could take three to five years to build out. Our transportation partners are listening, and working diligently with Meridian leaders, staff and developers.

Project One - Ten Mile. We owe great gratitude to our partner, ITD and our congressmen – the Ten Mile interchange is now a funded project. We received a federal earmark for \$19.6 million specifically for Ten Mile interchange! Special thanks to Senator Crapo and Representative Otter.

The Governor's 'Connecting Idaho' GARVEE program is also critical to this part of I-84; improving I-84 from Meridian to Caldwell. The Ten Mile project is currently in design, purchase of right of way will begin in 2007, and construction is set to begin in 2008. Folks, this was no small feat – and is huge for our community!

Project Two - Locust Grove Overpass. This is a major project where we are seeing tangible results with the purchase of right of way – funded by the City of Meridian – in partnership with ACHD and ITD. ACHD has been busy building the local road improvements to connect with the overpass. Locust Grove

connecting Franklin to Fairview is planned to begin this spring and finish this fall. Building of the overpass is anticipated to be completed in '07. Meridian pledged \$1.8 million to this project; \$1m of which was spent. Thank you, ACHD, for your critical role in this project.

Safety medians and adding a new traffic lane to Eagle Road, between Interstate 84 and Franklin Road has already started. The ACHD five-year plan shows a number of major road and/or intersection improvements over the next five years - and beyond.

Several recent projects have happened as the result of 'public/private' partnerships between the development community and ACHD for advanced construction projects. These projects, and partnerships, have been critical to our road infrastructure. We are optimistic we will see similar partnerships on Overland and Pine, as well as, key intersections on McMillan Road.

I could speak about road projects for another twenty minutes, which I won't. However, there's one last project to highlight. In a funding partnership with ACHD, we completed the Downtown Transportation Plan in June through an extensive public participation process. This is a significant step in resolving the decades-old question of handling traffic in the downtown; as well as solving access problems to Waltman Lane near I-84 and the function of that intersection - design on Phase I will begin this Spring.

Special thanks go to Principle Planner, Steve Siddoway, for his focused and determined efforts regarding transportation related projects, planning and issues.

## DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT

Last year I started the State of the City address by commenting, 'welcome to

Meridian's new city hall' in the Jabil building - that was on April 1, 2005. It was a joke then, however, it was a very long process to find that nothing is ever as easy as it should be. We worked with Senator Crapo's office, MDC, Idaho Northern and Union Pacific - who were all helpful - but there were too many obstacles.

We remain committed to keeping the City Hall project downtown and near the former and 'future' transportation corridor. Therefore -- The City has entered into an agreement to purchase the creamery site in downtown Meridian. At this time I can not release the details, as there will be a due diligence process as is prudent with these types of purchases.

The creamery has been an eye sore for many years and we look forward to working with the surrounding properties and our community to bring a city hall that this community will be proud of. It is because of the conservative budgeting and spending of former and current elected officials that we are able to pay for this project without asking our citizens to bond - there will not only be a cost savings, but also efficiencies to serving our public, in bringing our services under one roof.

The city has taken deliberate, coordinated steps to facilitate the development of Downtown Meridian. Those steps include a downtown marketing strategy, a transportation management plan, design guidelines, new development standards for Old Town in the UDC and environmental studies addressing concerns associated with redevelopment of the Creamery property.

I am sure many of you have noticed recent activity downtown. The Double D building is coming down – in its place will be an awesome project that will join the completed Farmers and Merchants building as a major project in the redevelopment of downtown. The old Shell station on the corner of Broadway and Main will be moving soon to be replaced with the City's first new vertically-integrated mixed use project.

We must plan our downtown district keeping in mind the future dual use transportation corridor that exists along the rail line. We must preserve the opportunities that exist in this corridor and keep this as a local and regional priority, being responsible for the future possibilities for public transportation and moving goods and services.

Downtown is seeing renewal - experiencing new events and possibilities. The 'Meridian Farmers Market' started last summer and is busying gearing up for another season. The city is working with the private sector and MDC exploring opportunities to bring a 'wireless bubble' to downtown - another positive step to attracting people and business.

A group of talented interested citizens and business owners came together and developed a design and plan for a sense of arrival and community identity. Isn't it fitting that a Meridian sculptor will bring our first piece of public art to reality? The first Gateway art project will be seen at the intersection of Main, Meridian and Waltman; beginning next month to be finished the end of June.

Mission Three... should you choose to accept it, is to Share Responsibility. The responsibility, accountability and sense of empowerment each of us owe ourselves and to our city.

## GROWTH

We have a strong commitment to assure quality growth and not 'growth at all costs.' Where the state allows, our policy has been and will continue to be 'pay as we grow'. Meaning as the city grows we will continue to ask stakeholders for impact fees or assessments for our water, sewer, roads, and parks as our city expands. Last year we collected 12.5 M for water and sewer; 5.5 M in road impact fees, and 2 M in park impact fees.

We are fully engaged in the 'Blueprint for Good Growth' process and development of the funding for growth toolkit. We have enlisted the help of a consultant to assist in developing a safety services impact assessment as capital expenditures to support police and fire due to growth, challenges our budget. We are hopeful that the State Legislature will provide for better tools at the local level that will help growth pay for our schools – from the calls I get from residents and businesses, this is a concern.

## MAYOR'S ANTI-DRUG COALITION

In Meridian, we accept nothing less than progress. That is the same in the expectations in our fight on drugs. The Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition has held a number of very meaningful programs from 'Celebrate Recovery' in September to our 'Frontline workers' training in January providing information to the workers on the street as to what to look for in illegal activity, preserving the quality of our neighborhoods. Thanks to Sanitary Services, Idaho Power, Intermountain Gas, Cable One, and our water, sewer and fire department for their participation.

Between 400 and 500 Meridian residents attended the 'Meth in Meridian' program held just weeks ago, sponsored by the Meridian Kiwanis, the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council and the Anti-Drug Coalition. We heard the devastating effects that meth has on cities, businesses, families, society as a whole. Facts are this highly addictive stimulant is hooking more and more people across the socioeconomic spectrum.

Ladies and Gentleman, this is not just a police problem. This is a community issue and it will take the community to assume responsibility. If we can address this as well as other forms of substance abuse from as many angles as possible we will make a significant difference. The Anti-Drug Coalition has a

three-pronged approach to this – Education and prevention, treatment, and enforcement. As elected officials, civic leaders, non-profits, the faith community, business leaders, and citizens; we must come together and do our part to make it clear – drugs are not welcome in our community!!! We want to make sure our citizens know they have choices – to say ‘no’; choices of treatment; choices to keeping their families and neighborhoods safe.

I believe in our City. I believe when we are called to act, we respond. I’m calling us to take responsibility and focus our attention to this community issue..

## MERIDIAN'S PROMISE

We will end this State of the City Address on a positive note – one that is focused on today; for the impact on our future depends on today. Meridian through the collaborative efforts of a number of individuals and organizations in our community; gained the ‘community of promise’ status last June. As a part of America’s Promise, Meridian is focused on the five promises to our youth. Safe places, caring adults, healthy start, marketable skills, and opportunities to serve. Fulfilling these promises will give our youth guidance, give them hope, give them a compass so they can find their way when they get older.

The Mayor’s Office joined the School Superintendent -Dr. Linda Clark’s and her passion for kids, the Boys & Girls Club, and other members of the Meridian’s Promise Board – to complete an application and then be selected as one of the nation’s 100 Best Places for Young People – Meridian was highlighted in Newsweek magazine’s “Taste of the Best”.

Consider joining these Meridian’s Promise ‘charter’ Partners that have committed to one or more of the five promises to our youth to hold them up as priorities of our community – that our children’s today is reflective of their tomorrows.

## CONCLUSION

One of my most memorable moments as Mayor was at the Meridian's Promise announcement ceremony, and the Boys & Girls Club summer's-end party. I was busy watching the kids soak our firefighters when Club Director Joey caught up with me, with Ryan in tow. I had met Ryan earlier that afternoon, where we had a chance to talk. Joey told me that Ryan had been looking for me and had something he had wanted to say. Ryan was bubbling with excitement. He looked at me with his eyes round and said, "Thank you Mayor, I had a blast!" Those are the moments we live for -- and work for. I will end with my comments back to Ryan -- symbolic of my time as your Mayor, "Ryan, so have I -- I have had a blast." Thank you for allowing me to serve you and this 'premiere' city in which we live, work, and play.

Citizens of Meridian -- are you ready for your mission? Our future begins today! Let's get'er done.