

# MERIDIAN STATE OF THE CITY 2008

Presented by Mayor Tammy de Weerd  
February 6, 2008  
Meridian Middle School  
Meridian, Idaho

## **Introduction of Good to Great:**

Welcome, and thank you so much for being here today to join me at my fifth State of the City address. I am honored by your presence.

I believe that “the next five years will define the next fifty for Meridian.” Our vision for this community is taking hold and citizens have stepped forward to participate in leadership and community decisions to support our mission.

Volunteerism and philanthropy are influencing our quality of life and spurring state and national recognition of our City. Groups are networking, partnerships are evolving, and the buzz around the region is “*What does Meridian have going on?!*”

This pride, passion, and participation motivates us to move from good to great – towards our mission of a Meridian, that is a premier place to live, work, and raise a family.

Our annual State of the City address usually reflects on the past year’s accomplishments. However, we have come to learn that the passage of only a year is not long enough for us to see what one poet calls “the ever whirling wheels of change.”

Cities only reveal themselves over time. For example, many of us here may not remember the Burns property; once a homestead, then a gas station, then a used car lot. Today, this area is Generations Plaza – an urban park and gathering place in the heart of downtown – celebrating our heritage and offering a ‘retreat’ for all to enjoy.

A city never stands still. We must constantly challenge ourselves in serving our citizens and ask ‘is it good enough?’ Four years ago in the midst of growth, our leadership team took a hard look around us and said, “We can do better.”

Jim Collins, the author of *Good to Great* contends that ‘good is the enemy of great,’ and that few ever achieve greatness because they settle for only being good.

I am humbled to serve as Mayor of this amazing City, and a member of a talented team dedicated to do better – moving from good to great.

## **Thank you:**

I would like to thank those who have been so generous to ensure that today’s program is a success:

To Saint Alphonsus, our title sponsor, you are a great community partner. The work that you do through Meridian’s Promise exemplifies the value that you and all of our ‘Promise Partners’ bring in our commitment to provide for our youth.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of those who have helped with this event – they are listed in your program. Please take time to thank them with a kind word or patronizing their business. Special thanks to volunteer Sherrie Ewing, and my office staff who worked many hours to make this event possible.

A heartfelt thanks to my husband, Jan and my four kids that are here with me today – I could not do this without your counsel, support, and tolerance of my schedule. I love you.

Thanks to you all.

**“First Who, Then What”:**

One of the key ingredients to becoming ‘great’ is your team. We have talented members on Meridian’s leadership bus. Three are new to our bus – two of them familiar faces.

Tom Barry is our new Public Works Director and comes to us from Redmond, Washington. He brings an impressive background to the position. Tom served as the Engineering and Operations Manager for the City of Redmond.

I must thank Len Grady – as the Interim Director he carried the water for seven months with a great eye to detail and raised the focus on several critical and timely projects.

Our new Parks Director, Steve Siddoway, is a new but familiar face; he worked in our Planning Department for eight years – then was lured away by the private sector. Fortunately his passion for the City got the best of him.

We completed an extensive search for our Police Chief and, in going through the process found our greatest asset is right here at home. Jeff Lavey, a Captain and interim Chief, was appointed officially as Chief last week. He has mapped out a strategy for the Department and already has a running start.

Fire Chief Ron Anderson, City Attorney/HR Director Bill Nary, Planning Director Anna Canning, and CFO Stacy Kilchenmann complete this team. They are the right people, in the right seats. They have a strong passion, commitment, and motivation to serve the public.

Other key members on our bus are the City Council members. I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge their hard work, support, and advice – more importantly, their vision, leadership and concern: Councilmembers Charlie Rountree, David Zaremba, Keith Bird and Joe Borton.

We work together on the City’s mission, core values, and areas of focus. They show extreme diligence and intensity in this regard.

Councilmen & Directors, will you stand to be recognized.

## **Where We Have Been:**

When I took office as Mayor in January 2004, Meridian was ‘good’. We were in the midst of significant growth that would present challenges for any community. I convened a Transition Team to evaluate where we were as a city.

The final report was issued in April 2004. The 38-member Transition Team spent hundreds of hours compiling recommendations with the goal of helping the City provide the best services possible to our citizens. Let me take a moment to highlight two of the recommendations.

One, was to form a Mayor’s Youth Council. I start with this recommendation because of the importance of our youth. You will hear from the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council, or MYAC, later about their activities. Many have heard me say, while youth represent 33 percent of our population, they are one hundred percent of our future. The value these young leaders bring to our community is great. They participate on City Committees and Commissions. They are leaders on social issues such as bringing the first Habitat for Humanity home to Meridian, the Idaho Meth Project, and are active in our legislative process. Through their efforts, Meridian is moving from good to great.

This second example encompasses several recommendations on easing the way of doing business using technology. The City set up online bills, and payment options, in utility billing; and offer employment applications and police reporting online. This saves City resources, and at the same time provides citizens choices on what method works best for them to do their business with the City.

Our report card on the 90 recommendations shows we implemented or improved areas with 91% achieved – focused on areas such as: creating jobs closer to home, communication, financial tools and accountability, reaching out and engaging our public, and process improvements citywide.

We listened and responded to the Transition Team’s recommendations. We put in place excellent employees. We created strong public/private partnerships. Most importantly, we rolled up our sleeves and did the work that needed to be done. I am proud to say that the State of our City is taking the strides to ‘great’.

## **As We Move Forward:**

I am honored to serve a second term as Mayor and appreciate your confidence shown last November. In many ways, Meridian today is a vision taking shape. We are no longer just a bedroom community, but a self-sufficient, full-service city.

I believe a great city begins as an act of the imagination.

What I imagine for our future is a more prosperous city for all citizens; with better jobs to support our families; affordable housing to shelter us; public schools and institutions of higher learning to educate our children to the highest standards; safer neighborhoods; more parks, natural areas and open space to nourish our souls; a friendly, small town feel; and a transportation system to serve the entire region to get us where we need to go, safely and efficiently.

It has been said, “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. But vision with action can change the world.”

**MYAC presentation:**

As we talk about changing the world and action, I would like to introduce the Chair of the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council – RoAnne de Weerd. The name and face might look and sound familiar – through hard work and dedication to MYAC, RoAnne was re-elected by her peers for a second year and is here to tell you of their activities

*[MYAC presentation: RoAnne de Weerd, MYAC Chair]*

*“I feel honored to be able to stand in front of such a SOMEWHAT good-looking crowd today, representing Meridian’s future. I want to extend my thanks to my fellow COMPLETELY good-looking youth council members for electing me as their chair. Sadly this is my last year on the council, and shoot, I was just getting to like them all; but honestly I know they will go on to do great things in our community.*

*As Jim Collins states, “IF YOU’RE DOING SOMETHING YOU CARE DEEPLY ABOUT, AND, IF YOU BELIEVE IN IT - IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE NOT TRYING TO MAKE IT GREAT.” This group of around 40 youth members have honest, vested, interest in Meridian and its future.*

*We serve on several city committees and commissions: Sara Steele is a voting member on Parks and Rec.; Jon Stucker holds an executive seat on the Arts Commission. I co-chair Meridian’s Promise. Motivation, commitment, leadership, and patience have been keys to our success in the city. Trust me – patience becomes the member’s best friend when they sit through meetings such as Traffic Safety – right, Chris?!*

*We put in countless hours; of course without pay, and we have driven the youth efforts to raise over \$130,000 for Habitat for Humanity. With the help of the Chair of the Habitat subcommittee, Nicole Foster, our ‘first in Meridian’ Habitat house, will be the ‘first in the State’ to be fundraised by youth and built by youth.*

*The end of Meth use is one of our top priorities. The devastating facts and statistics that methamphetamine use brings to the Treasure Valley, and our own city, will not be tolerated. The Youth Council sent a strong statement last Spring, when bringing hundreds to rally and march to the Idaho Center to hear Milton Creagh speak. The event drew over 5,000 people. We created 5 PSA’s, out of the 7 aired, on Channel 7 throughout the month of March. And now we have joined forces with the Idaho Meth Project, to fight and prevent our city from allowing this evil drug to survive. This effort is chaired by Behak Lloyd.*

*On a lighter side, the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council took a slightly different role in our community, or our state this year. We have branched out of just city politics, and stepped into the realm of state politics. Chairing the Government Affairs subcommittee, I am proud to announce to you all today that we have partnered with the American Heart Association to help lobby bills on behalf of the future health of our youth. We support legislative action to rule out all junk food in our school vending machines. Childhood obesity is an epidemic we take serious and will take action in the prevention of it.*

*Networking is key to those of us that have aspirations to eventually work in governmental positions. This subcommittee helps us do it and I want to thank the Mayor, Cheryl Miller, and Adrean Casper for allowing us to borrow their knowledge and experience.*

*Subcommittees have been the driving force behind our council this year. Other efforts are the Gang Awareness subcommittee chaired by Sara Steele and the 'Pet project' that focuses on volunteer activities for the animal shelter, chaired by Michael Proffit. These efforts focus on issues that the youth members hold close and are determined to dedicate their time in the assistance to a need.*

*Our plates are full, our lives are happy, our community is safe. Help me in thanking the Meridian's Mayor's Youth Advisory Council Members for their time that they have devoted in helping to assist Meridian in moving from 'good to great.'*

Thank you Meridian for your continued support and our biggest thanks go out to Mayor Tammy for allowing us to let our voice be heard. Advice to next year's Council; you learn the most in tough and complicated experiences, never give up on your dream even if the road seems to be under construction. And that can be often here in Meridian."

As you can see – the young people of Meridian are a driving force helping us move from good to great. Expect more 'great' to come from this group in the future!

### **The Hedgehog Concept:**

In determining the best path to move the City forward and in assuring we produce the best long-term results, we will employ a concept that Jim Collins in his book "Good to Great" calls the Hedgehog concept, to assist in 'attaining that piercing clarity' and then 'exercising the relentless discipline' to move from good to great.

Two of the areas are applicable to what we have been doing – One, "What you are deeply passionate about" – such as our mission and core purpose; and second, "What we can be the best in the world at?" – how we uniquely contribute to the citizens we touch better than anyone.

All our city departments play pivotal roles in getting us there. Here are just a few areas we will not only be successful in, but can be the best at:

- Customer Service and rapid response to our customers,
- Engaging and empowering Meridian's youth, and
- Strengthening partnerships with community groups and stakeholders.

Examples of how we are getting there:

In customer service, we are giving staff tools to provide on-site information – our Public Works inspectors have GIS in the field for instant information. We have created work zones for our Water and Police Departments for faster response times.

To engage our youth, we have doubled the readers in the Mayors/CEO Book Club; and increased the Meridian's Promise Partners to 50 plus, effectively touching over 5500 kids last year through partner events.

To strengthen partnerships, we are collaborating with our places of worship through the Faith Ambassadors Council to bring solutions to community issues that challenge our families and children; the Meridian Arts Commission is tapping the talent of local artists for the new City Hall art display and plaza sculpture; and the Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition continues to draw from their passionate members delivering award-winning prevention programs giving youth tools to say 'no' to drugs. Our goal in 2008 is to achieve the 'Drug Free Community' status through the Office of National Drug Control Policy utilizing our partners.

Not only do we have great passion in these areas and others; we know we must be successful. With all of the City departments on the bus, we will work diligently to be the best in serving Meridian's citizens.

We are currently defining the third area – 'what drives your resource engine', in how we can develop sustainable resources that deliver superior performance relative to our mission.

Our measurements will include traditional ones such as: number of park acres per thousand citizens, crime rates and traditional response times, and cost of utilities and doing business.

We will add measurements, such as time to respond to citizen inquiries, soliciting feedback on quality of service, and evaluating employee satisfaction in training, communication, and recognition.

Measures must be more than numbers, they should show 'walking the talk'. The construction of City Hall is an example, or measurement, of utilizing resources.

This project is using funds saved for this purpose. Fiscal constraint by current and former Mayors, City Councils, and staff; meant public bonding was not needed. This building will allow the City, for generations, to provide services to its citizens from one centralized location.

### **Working Together:**

On a broader scale, we ask ourselves – can we apply the Hedgehog concept for partnerships regionally? Yes, we can. Meridian is one seat at the regional table, but must be an active participant to find regional success.

The City of Meridian and surrounding communities are working as partners. There is no other way.

Our region is collaboratively working to create sustainable jobs closer to where people live. We are planning for and dedicating right of way for transportation corridors; and working to develop growth-funding tools on a regional basis.

But we must also implement a region-wide air quality plan – today – not waiting until the Federal government tells us what to do. The good news is, we have such a plan, developed by the Treasure Valley Air Quality Council. We need to adopt it as a region; then, implement it. If we all do our part – we will all breathe better.

Regional priorities are mirrored at home. Partnerships and planning are essential to ensure an attractive, safe, well-designed city as well. Bringing jobs closer to home to reduce vehicle trips locally as well as trips from Canyon County, through us, to Boise; evaluating land use and design ordinances; and updating growth impact fees – are areas of focus for our departments.

An example, that involved over 300 members of the public, is our Ten Mile Specific Area Plan. The City of Meridian prepared this prize-winning plan for the land surrounding the future Ten Mile Interchange incorporating components such as land use, transportation, market analysis, and design guidelines.

We have completed our citywide Pathway plan. This system will link schools, parks, homes, and businesses to one another, making it practical to walk and bike safely in Meridian. We will begin prioritizing areas of focus and how to implement the plan this year.

### **Facing the Brutal Facts:**

I said that a great city was an act of the imagination. Imagine where we might go, locally and regionally, when we have executed what we have planned.

The eyes of the state are on Meridian, for we are blazing new trails. We have developed great tools to manage growth and to shape our quality of life – we have nothing to fear if we use these tools wisely.

What I would like to do this afternoon is to cover five focus areas that pose the greatest risks and challenges over the next decade in moving from good to great: in ***jobs, education, transportation, public safety, and neighborhood livability***. All five are interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent.

Number One is continuing to create family wage ***jobs***; and promoting Economic Excellence.

Our City and this Valley have seen economic growth, and the region has been among the most successful in the Nation. However, economic prosperity comes with no guarantee of either longevity or equity. We must take steps now to make sure this success reaches well into the future.

Our economic development efforts must be strategic – closely tied to education, transportation, and land use.

One of the best ways to diversify our local economy is to aggressively pursue our “target enterprise corridor” strategy. Bringing the type of jobs and industry we feel will add value in these four areas.

The first area identified is along Eagle Road as the ‘health science and technology’ corridor. Our target industries include technology, biotechnology, health sciences, and professional services.

A key partner to the success of this health science corridor is Idaho State University. ISU is consolidating and expanding their Treasure Valley programs, co-locating with the School District in the former Jabil building. They will deliver the finest health sciences education, research, and workforce development. ISU's presence creates and supports opportunities for partnerships, innovation, and targeted business attraction – critical to the success of this corridor. They are already establishing key relationships with businesses here.

Northwest Nazarene University will also play an important role in our success; a group of NNU Senior Business students will work on an extensive marketing research and strategic execution plan for the City. They will focus on the positioning of a second business enterprise corridor located in northwest Meridian.

NNU will also offer a Meridian Business Development Education Series set to begin this May. The series will include two tracks focused on executive and management development skills – expertise that every growing business needs.

The availability of commercial and office space is key in our ability to attract jobs. Last year was a blockbuster for our City seeing construction of 1.9 million square feet valued at over \$157 million, an increase from 2006 of 32%.

We have seen commercial and restaurant investment in our community such as – Kohl's, Joe's, Harley Davidson, Lowe's, and the Courtyard by Marriott. As well as, Jakers, Fuddrucker's, The Griddle, and Harry's.

Downtown, we are slowly seeing the signs of redevelopment efforts. Not just property acquisition, but also in creating public spaces, the availability of free wi-fi, new tenants, streetscape improvements, community events, and several downtown buildings. Other proposed developments include the Main 5 Building, the McFadden Exchange Bank, and potential parking options using the City Hall site once vacated.

The Meridian Development Corporation has recently purchased and consolidated the properties on Broadway, the block between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. They have released an RFQ seeking to develop the area into a mixed-use, vertically integrated pilot project to revitalize the area. The project will incorporate a public parking component and be a catalyst to development centered on pedestrian opportunities in this area.

Our recently earned 'Entitlement City' status will infuse money into downtown bringing sidewalks, housing, and jobs in the coming years.

Retailers and restaurateurs have discovered our downtown such as Rick's Press Room, the Lil Olde (antiques) Shoppe, Heirloom Home Décor, Meridian Cycles, and others are showing interest. As well they should – Meridian is a great place to work, shop and, soon, to live downtown.

This past year we worked with employers such as Blackhawk Industries. Their facility is designed as a state of the art, high-mix, low-volume manufacturing facility. They will soon add a distribution center that will house and ship all of Blackhawk's product line. They grew from 2 to 80 employees in nine months, with expectations of reaching 250 in the next 18.



Our business parks are growing and thriving, finding our central location convenient both for their workforce and doing business.

Silverstone added corporate offices for 1-800-InfoFast and Bodybuilding.com, joining the likes of Citi and Workscape. Bodybuilding.com brought with them 140 family-wage jobs.

Petra moved their corporate headquarters to Meridian this last year, as did DMB & Associates, and we anticipate others to follow as they desire to be in the heart of the Valley.

In 2007, El Dorado opened 14 new businesses, such as A Plus Benefits and IQ Magazine. Additionally, Lifecare Hospitals and Advanced Health Care will open this coming year.

Gramercy, off Overland, is coming on line with almost 99,000 square feet of office/commercial under construction.

According to the Idaho Department of Labor's third quarter estimates, over 1,650 new jobs were netted last year in Meridian despite the loss of construction jobs. The number of businesses changed from just over 1,500 in '04 to 2,460 this last year – that's an increase of over 60%.

Developments such as Dennis Baker's – Pinebridge, CenterCal's Meridian Town Center, and Portico will bring 'class A' office and commercial focusing on high-end jobs. Portico, by Gardner-Ahlquist is estimated to be an \$83 million dollar project. Their first building is six-stories with 132,000 square feet; to begin construction this spring.

These businesses and developments are bringing jobs and investment to Meridian; jobs that compliment our other "great" employers and diversify our economy and workforce.

In doing this we are reminded that all these employers need one thing – skilled workers.

In a fast-breaking economy, 60 percent of manufacturing revenues are from new products developed every two years. The cities with the smartest workers win. That is our competitive edge.

Number two is of vital importance for the future, and that is education.

I believe that public education is not only America's greatest priority, but our most powerful competitive advantage.

Our citizens must have opportunity and access to receive quality education and training – young or old – to stay competitive and give hope for a bright future.

Education and hope for the young begins with safe places and a positive learning environment. Last year, I announced on behalf of the Boys & Girls Club, a new home. While we thought we had an ideal future place, it posed several problems. First, we needed the facility sooner rather than later. Second, we questioned how to get the kids there safely.

I am proud to announce, both these issues have been addressed – with a new location. Known as the former School District offices on Meridian Road; the ‘sooner rather than later’ issue has been addressed as the Boys & Girls Club closed on this facility last week. Getting kids to the club safely has improved, as many of the members are students at Meridian Elementary; right next door.

A capital campaign will kick-off at this year’s annual Wild West fundraiser April 5<sup>th</sup>. The Meridian expansion will combine with Kuna’s project. The Meridian project has already received \$178,000 through Albertson’s Boise Open and \$80,000 in seed money to kick this campaign off with a running start! Please be involved and give generously.

Education and hope have leaders in Dr. Linda Clark and the School District Trustees. Partnerships have been crucial in providing quality education; and keeping our youth interested and challenged. The purchase of the new District home took vision and has resulted in increased educational opportunities for our students.

One of those exciting opportunities and Meridian’s most significant advancements last year was ISU’s partnership with the School District. They will offer an expanded health science curriculum, notably in the pharmacy program thanks to \$5 million from the Skaggs Family Foundation – partners in achieving ‘excellence’.

ISU and NNU, another School District partner, are committed to grow and expand their concurrent credit initiatives for high school students. These opportunities are a vital advantage to the success of our children as they enter college – and for our community.

To that end, I will be working with our institutions of higher education, the School District, and our business community to create the Mayor’s Meridian Professional and Workforce Advisory Council. The Dean of the College of Business with NNU has offered to chair this group. This brings educational leaders and private industry representatives together to focus on the educational and training needs to area businesses. Additionally, it will optimize resources to ensure our goal of a highly educated workforce for economic excellence in Meridian.

Number Three – transportation. Everything we do to protect and improve our quality of life gets stuck in a traffic jam if we don’t have a transportation system that connects our communities, whether by car, plane, rail, bus, bicycle, or foot.

In this third area we are making progress, but it is not good enough.

To improve, we must develop the region’s transportation infrastructure as an interrelated system. To accomplish this goal we need tools to develop and fund these systems.

When I say system, I mean just that – not a jumble of independent components. How kids walk to school is part of it; so is how we move goods and services bound for Chicago. Connecting downtown Meridian to the airport should be part of the same system that connects Meridian to Tokyo.

Several important projects were completed last year including a second lane from I-84 to Eagle Road, the improvements at the intersection of Meridian and Overland roads, and

the widening of Overland west to Linder. Through a public-private partnership the widening of Overland is anticipated to continue to Ten Mile this next year.

The long-awaited Locust Grove Overpass was completed four months early, helping to relieve pressure at the Eagle Road and Meridian interchanges by over 10,000 vehicles trips a day. It has made an important connection tying Meridian on both sides of I-84 as one. Locust Grove, one mile west of Eagle and one mile east of Meridian, is an overpass not an interchange; conforming to ITD's requirements on the minimal two-mile spacing of interchanges.

When it comes to transportation funding, legislative sessions are paramount to the Treasure Valley and the entire State. Legislators have been true to their commitment to GARVEE – we hope it continues. This year's request, if approved, includes fully funding the Ten Mile interchange to begin construction July 2009.

To support Meridian and west Valley traffic and I-84 safety; let's make sure GARVEE gets approved. Get involved by contacting your Legislator and offer them your support.

Last year the 'Star Legislation' was adopted; this allows development to put in improvements over and above what their own impact will have on the system. Tomorrow's improvements paid today with private dollars – before the impact.

CenterCal, the lifestyle development on Eagle and Fairview, is proposing to utilize this tool – we are working with them and our Legislative representatives to assure this can happen.

Our District 14, 20, and 21 elected officials have been working with us on transportation issues. As have other Treasure Valley and State elected leaders – specifically, Senator McGee and Governor Otter.

Despite their efforts our streets and highways are suffering from lack of funding. ACHD will be once again be delaying several critical Meridian projects due to funding issues – this we cannot afford. To the Legislators this session I say, give us funding tools. I promise we will use them wisely.

The City of Meridian will not just pass the buck to our Legislators. We advocate and create public/private road partnerships at every opportunity – more than any other community. We have been working with our Ada County partners with BluePrint for Good Growth hoping to create local funding tools through an Adequate Public Facilities ordinance to address transportation needs, among others. Delays have prompted us to move forward in developing our own. We simply can't afford to wait any longer.

Number Four. Peace in the streets is part of everyone's definition of quality of life. Public safety remains our greatest responsibility.

That is why I am pleased to report that crime in Meridian has once again decreased. The crime rate for the City of Meridian dropped nearly 13% per capita last year. There was a decrease in offenses; and we increased the number of arrests and cases cleared. These are outcomes any city would be proud to boast.

Response times for both Police and Fire continue to be high priorities, as every second counts. In Fire, we have improved response times from 5 minutes/40 seconds to 4 minutes/33 seconds over the last four years, as a result of opening two stations during that time. With the planned addition of Fire Station Number 5 to open this June, I know this downward trend will continue.

In Police we have also seen a reduction in Priority 3 immediate response calls. The average response time was 3 minutes/30 seconds; an improvement of 25 seconds from 2005. With the opening of Locust Grove Overpass, we will see further improvements.

A key component to go from ‘good to great’ for any city is making a safe community even safer. I know that our Police and Fire Departments work hard to ensure that every child, citizen, and business is fully protected.

In fact, you can see them in action nearly everyday at the new Training Tower located at Fire Station Number 1. This new facility, built through a critical partnership with the Meridian Rural Fire District, is providing daily training opportunities unmatched in the State of Idaho.

While our Fire Department is able to do live burns, practice cutting through roofs, or performing rescues from tight quarters; our Police Department can use the facility to conduct their own training. This project was also made possible through the implementation of our growth-related Public Safety Impact Fees. It is an amazing facility that is already paying dividends.

While Police and Fire get most of the credit for their work in keeping Meridian safe, other departments, like our Planning Department, do their part to prevent crime through environmental design. Being forward thinking in how we design the City, we are able to identify potential crime areas in advance, and eliminate them through design to keep the area safer when built. Our Public Works and Water Department assure adequate water flows for fire suppression.

Safety is security – and securing our resources is the focus of our Wastewater Treatment staff. They are working to become the first to operate a Class A reclaimed water system. This system meets the state’s highest standards, making it safe for direct contact and will be used in a nearby City park.

Number Five is about improving neighborhood quality of life for the people who live here now and for those in the future.

We are focusing on neighborhood safety and engaging neighbors as partners with law enforcement. We have also trained utility and sanitary service workers on signs of illegal activity and what they should do if they see something of concern – keeping our neighborhoods and workers safe.

Our Crime Prevention efforts are growing in the Neighborhood Watch programs and subdivisions participating in events like National Night Out. These events bring our Police and Fire, and elected officials to neighborhoods for that face-to-face contact.

Our Parks Department is committed to nurturing our growing park system for all to enjoy and continuing to connect neighbors through events like ‘movie night in the park’ and the Christmas Tree Lighting. They will be working with the Parks Commission on personalizing a few of our neighborhood parks to reflect the area priorities and create special identities for use.

For the future, we are approaching the task of providing housing choices by building and supporting strong, healthy, unique, and vibrant neighborhoods. Housing alone does not make a neighborhood. Densification does not create community. Our efforts to improve neighborhood livability and densities should go hand-in-hand – that means green open spaces and natural habitats; future transit areas; safe streets; and thriving neighborhood businesses.

Great planning results in quality projects.

I will highlight two of these approved developments. In South Meridian we will see the ‘Cavanaugh’ Subdivision, a 177-acre Kastera Home development on the SE corner of Meridian and Victory roads. This mixed-use development will consist of apartments, condominiums, single family homes, neighborhood commercial known as “The Boardwalk”, a school site, and future transit stops. A project highlight will be the civic and social hall located in the existing Frank Lloyd Wright inspired mansion currently located on site.

The Tree Farm subdivision, north of Chinden, is bringing innovation in planning to this 360-acre mixed-use community. It was designed with the history of the land in mind. The Tree Farm, by O’Neill Enterprises, will create a community of lasting value that will offer a stimulating living environment with a connection to nature, including an operating nursery.

Moving towards ‘great’ demands that we set our sights high. My wish for Meridian over the next four years and into the next decade – is that, together, we imagine great things, and continue to build on our accomplishments. It is within our power to choose the kind of Meridian we want.

A city that welcomes the new while keeping the best of the past: those amenities that are the urban experience – pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, coffee houses, pubs, theaters, parks, restaurants, bookstores, libraries, and galleries that tie together our past, present, and future.

### **[Legacy Award]**

Each year, the Mayor’s Community Legacy Award goes to a citizen who demonstrates a long-time commitment to this community by volunteering, supporting, and building a legacy for future generations.

Service to a community for some can be more than a job; for this year’s recipient it’s a passion.

Whether through volunteering precious hours preserving our history on committees or projects, or working his beloved profession-his second job; this man is dedicated to ensuring Meridian's history is not forgotten.

He is no stranger in Meridian, and is often one of the first to welcome a new business as it opens its doors in our community – on a “count to three” and the click of a camera. The dedication of this individual in bringing news of community events and informing the public about important issues makes him much more than just a purveyor of news.

In fact, if it were not for his dedication and sacrifice to launch the resurrection the Valley Times in 2000, many of our community's most important events may have never been documented for future generations.

His legacy is in documenting our ‘history in the making’ – capturing the highs and lows of our growing community. With his pen and camera, the community's heritage will be passed on to the next generation and forever be remembered.

Today we honor Frank Thomason, with the Mayor's Community Legacy Award.

Meridian is a great city because we have great people like Frank. And great people will continue to move here because we are special.

James Baldwin wrote, “There is never a time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment, the time is always now.” You and I have a phenomenal opportunity to shape the future of Meridian – continuing the movement to ‘great’.

So in the end, the state of the city changes over time but some things never do – the hard work, the challenge, the excitement, and the fulfillment of participating meaningfully in the life of our community.

Jim Collins writes that the single most important point in all of *Good to Great* is, “Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.”

We have the right people on the bus. We will seek the brutal facts assuring we are going in the right direction.

We are dedicated to economic excellence bringing good paying jobs through target enterprise corridors. We plan to be the best at customer service – keeping in touch with you in how we are doing.

We will stand by our educational partners to enhance opportunities for our children and our businesses addressing workforce needs. We have great faith and hope in our School District; and our higher education institutions interested in serving our community. I am excited to work with Dr. Valais and ISU to achieve a shared vision for excellence; also with NNU with their Executive Skills Development Series.

We will continue working with transportation agencies and the Legislature advocating for funding tools and promoting public/private relationships to build roads; today.

And, we will be focused in our efforts to protect your quality of life. We will provide for your safety – in police, fire, and public utilities; and to assure elements important to healthy neighborhoods are a priority.

We are committed to the discipline needed to become ‘great’ – a premiere place.

For all that, I want to thank my colleagues on the City Council, city employees, government and business, civic and faith leaders, and my fellow citizens of Meridian. If you are ever asked why we do this, tell them:

“Because quality of life is not just about the place we live; it is about the way we live;

To create more community, more compassion, more peace;

To create a city of hope, opportunity and accomplishment; and

To leave our children a city better and more beautiful than was given to us.”

God Bless.