

Judy Peavey-Derr and Robert Flowers : You can have a say in how valley deals with growth

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Growth in Southwest Idaho is a major issue — obvious to anyone who has lived here for any amount of time. Since 1980, the population of our region has nearly doubled. Two-thirds of Idaho's growth occurred in the six-county region of Ada, Canyon, Boise, Elmore, Gem and Payette counties. This growth has brought economic prosperity to many, but it has also placed demands on our roads, schools, sewer, water, parks, fire, police and other public services. Traffic on Interstate 84, already stop-and-go during peak hours, could increase by 50 percent by 2030. Congestion and air-quality issues would increase. Residential developments located far from job centers could add to traffic. Meanwhile, the ability to use other types of transportation — buses, walking, biking, even rail — would be hampered by low-density development patterns.

The biggest challenge, however, is getting people involved in helping plan for growth. How many times have you complained about growth? Have you wondered if anyone is giving any thought to the future? This is your opportunity to be part of the solution.

We invite you to get involved in looking at how our region might grow over the next 25 years by attending one of four workshops in November.

Tuesday, Nov. 16: 9 a.m. to noon, Hispanic Cultural Center, 315 Stampede Drive, Nampa; or 6 to 9 p.m., Hampton Inn at the Idaho Center, 5700 E. Franklin Road, Nampa.

Wednesday, Nov. 17: 9 a.m. to noon or 6 to 9 p.m., Best Western Vista Inn at the Airport (Rocky Mountain Conference Center), 2645 Airport Way, Boise.

You will hear about how much growth is anticipated and what key challenges we face in accommodating that growth. Working with other participants in what is called a "scenario game", you will help develop a map of the future. The workshops conclude with each group presenting its scenario to the other groups and identifying similarities between the various scenarios.

The scenarios you help develop will provide information to Communities in Motion, a transportation plan covering the six-county region. It will also be used in the Blueprint for Good Growth project in Ada County. In early 2005, we will provide evaluations about what the different scenarios of the future could do to traffic, land consumption and public services. Based on these evaluations, a "preferred" scenario will be selected by late spring 2005. This scenario will become the basis for a regional transportation plan and also for an intensive review of plans and ordinances within Ada County. What comes out of this plan will therefore depend on who shows up in November for the workshops. Will you be there?

For more information, please visit <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/workshops.html> or call COMPASS at 855-2558, Ext. 231.

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