

## Experts call for greater teamwork on growth

Land-use panel says area's quality of life is at stake

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People seeking quality of life continue to move to Ada County, making it one of the nation's fastest-growing counties and Boise the third-largest city in the Northwest, according to some estimates.

That coveted quality of life is at stake, however, if county and city officials don't start working together to manage rapid growth, warns a report from land-use experts.

A panel of Urban Land Institute members from across the nation visited Boise in February to examine countywide growth issues, including the impact that planned communities could have on the area. City and county officials recently received a follow-up report on the panel's visit.

Its advice for the county and its cities: Make growth plans enforceable, develop within already-developed areas, aim for high-quality development, pay attention to areas on the edges of development — and get along with each other.

"One of the key components of the panel's recommendation is that Ada County and its cities need to come together and stop acting unilaterally," reads the report. "This is imperative because the consequences of unilateral action are unplanned and disconnected growth, wasted resources and infrastructure, increased traffic, and a decline in the region's quality of life. The panel believes these consequences are too great to be ignored."

Boise Mayor Dave Bieter agrees.

"One of our biggest concerns is the possibility of large planned communities being developed far away from existing cities, and the negative impacts those communities would have on our roads, air quality and especially our tax bills," Bieter said. "We're very pleased that the ULI panel recognizes the threat this 'leap-frog development' poses to our quality of life. And we agree completely with the panel that Ada County should let the Blueprint for Good Growth determine where planned communities are allowed."

The Blueprint for Good Growth, a long-term land-use and transportation plan for Ada County that's being drafted now, will serve as a tool for the county and its cities to use to update their growth plans, zoning ordinances and planning policies.

Putting a good growth plan together is not enough, the panel said.

"The Blueprint can be successfully implemented only if it is enforceable," said the panel. "To ensure that everyone will be on the same page and willing to take the next step in the process, the panel recommends the use of a mediator to help guide the process. The panel believes Boise State University would be an

excellent facilitator for this process because it is a regional institution that serves a number of constituencies."

Panel members said they were impressed that the county, its six cities and other organizations are trying to address growth issues with the Blueprint project. But they're not convinced the cooperation is permanent.

"The panel is under the impression that after the county and its cities come together to draft the Blueprint, they then will go back and act in their own interests," according to the report. "It is imperative that there is complete buy-in and that the Blueprint is followed by all."

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### Recommendations

The Urban Land Institute had five key recommendations for Ada County and its cities:

- Enforce and implement the Blueprint for Good Growth.
- Promote infill development.
- Plan for high-quality development.
- Focus on the fringe.
- No more unilateral action.

#### The Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is an international nonprofit land-use research and education organization with more than 22,000 members.

Established in 1936, its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. Members examine land-use issues, impartially report findings and convene forums to find solutions to complex land-use problems, collaborating with industry and stakeholder groups worldwide.

#### About ULI Idaho

The Urban Land Institute's new Idaho District Council, created in September, has 137 members from Idaho, Montana and Spokane. Members include Realtors, lenders, engineers, developers, planning officials, city and county officials, architects, attorneys, property owners and others.

Quentin Knipe, chairman of the Urban Land Institute Idaho District Council, said, "One of the things I would like to see ULI Idaho do in the next couple of months is to put together a program that addresses the five recommendations given to us by a panel of national ULI experts who recently assessed growth and land-use issues in the Treasure Valley. Implementation of the Blueprint for Good Growth is the first one of those recommendations we are working on."

