“Ensuring a Livable Future”

Mayor David Bieter’s Mid-Term Report to the People of Boise

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Introduction

Two years ago, Boise’s citizens chose a new direction at City Hall, a direction guided by a promise to enhance our community’s economic health, to protect our incomparable environment and livability, and most of all to build a local government that constantly strives to earn the people’s trust.

As we pass the midway point of this administration, I’m pleased to report major accomplishments in all three areas.

The City of Boise has demonstrated strong leadership in growth management efforts in the Treasure Valley, with the goal of making sure growth happens in the right places and pays its own way. Working with businesses, service groups and citizens, we’ve cut regulatory red tape, developed new partnerships to support youth and expand housing opportunities, and directed resources toward neighborhood needs. And with strong direction from our City Council and the incomparable support of our city employees, we’ve brought structural stability to the city budget, focused resources on our core missions, and established the state’s first municipal ethics commission.

Together, we’re on our way toward ensuring a livable future – creating a city that acts quickly, deliberately, and thoughtfully to preserve its most precious assets so that growth, when it comes, does so on the community’s terms. This report details some of the progress we’ve made. I invite all Boiseans to join me in building on these successes in the years to come.

Ondo ibili! (Best wishes!)

David H. Bieter
Mayor
Making Government Accessible

“To truly earn the public’s confidence, we must not only keep our own house in order, but also demonstrate that we’re willing to listen to their suggestions, be responsive to their needs and admit that, sometimes, we at City Hall don’t have all the answers.”

-- Mayor David H. Bieter

Meeting with neighborhoods. In 2004, Mayor Bieter fulfilled a promise to personally visit with representatives of all 34 official Boise neighborhood associations during his first year in office. In 2005, he did so again, bringing along representatives from Police, Parks, Library, and other city departments to answer questions and collect suggestions of ways to improve municipal services.

Saturday Office Hours. Every six to eight weeks, Mayor Bieter opens the doors of his office on a Saturday morning. An estimated 350 citizens have taken the opportunity to discuss issues with him face to face, no appointment necessary. The meetings have yielded valuable information and helped the city better address citizen concerns.

Citizen survey. In Spring 2005, as part of its strategic planning effort, the City of Boise undertook its first broad-based “customer-satisfaction survey” in many years. More than 90 percent of city residents polled rated their city’s overall quality of life as “good” or “excellent,” and three out of four residents said they believe that the city is headed in the right direction. Survey results helped city leaders gauge public desires and concerns, and provided direction for the future. The city intends to conduct such surveys every two years to help guide policy improvements and budget development.

City Council “live.” In April 2004, the Boise City Council began broadcasting its meetings live on TVTV, Cable Channel 11 (now seen on cable Channel 98). In February 2005, the council began video and audio streaming of its meetings on the Web. These tools have helped citizens stay informed about issues that are important to them.

Living Within Our Means

“I have the greatest optimism for the future of our city, but only if we’re willing to take the necessary – and, at times, difficult – steps to ensure that our financial status is solid and that our citizens continue to receive the levels of service they expect and deserve. Accomplishing those crucial goals requires us to adopt a conservative approach to our fiscal strategy.”

-- Mayor David H. Bieter

A business plan for city government. In mid-2005, the City of Boise adopted its 2005 Strategic Plan after months of effort and input by the Mayor, the City Council, employees, and the public. The result is the first true business plan for Boise city government, one that identifies and prioritizes its core missions and provides the flexibility to weather economic shifts. Strategic planning will continue in 2006 with creation of department-level plans.

Budgeting for the future. Closely tied to the strategic planning process, development and adoption of the City of Boise Fiscal Year 2006/2007 Budget represents a major step toward stability and accountability. Rather than imposing across-the-board cuts to address millions of dollars in projected deficits, the Mayor, City Council, and departments used the priorities identified in the strategic plan to cut spending in non-core areas and reduce staffing
while directing resources toward public services in key focus areas.

Efficiency in emergency services. The City of Boise launched a pilot program placing certified paramedics on its fire vehicles, ensuring that first responders to medical emergencies can provide the most comprehensive care. Boise also is working with Ada County to jointly locate emergency medical services (EMS) and fire stations.

Saving for capital needs. Rather than asking citizens to pay more taxes, the City of Boise is setting aside current revenues for certain future construction projects such as new police facilities — potentially saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

Pushing for tax relief. Mayor Bieter has called on the Legislature to address the growing imbalance in the state property tax system, which has shifted a greater share of the burden to individual homeowners. The Mayor has endorsed increasing the property tax exemption for homeowners, raising the “circuit breaker” tax credit for low-income seniors and the disabled, and diversifying impact fees to cover more urban services.

Priorities over perks. Mayor Bieter took no raise during his first two years in office. He also refused (and then permanently removed from the budget) the $6,000 annual car allowance accepted by previous administrations, opting instead to use city fleet vehicles (including several hybrid-fuel models) when he needs to drive on city business — and when his bicycle can’t get him there.

Ensuring Economic Vitality

“I want us to get away from the idea that economic development comes at the expense of livability. My goal is to demonstrate that good jobs, a quality education system and a clean environment are all part of the same equation.”

-- Mayor David H. Bieter

Economic development. Aware of the need to stay competitive in attracting and retaining high-wage jobs, the City of Boise has increased its economic development staff and made a major financial contribution to the Boise Valley Economic Partnership. Among the business news attributable to the city’s efforts:

*Western Trailers Co.* — Construction of a new 20,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and hiring of up to 50 additional employees was made possible thanks to $5.2 million in industrial revenue bonds authorized by the city.

*Resource Data, Inc.* — Alaska’s leading computer software applications developer, with more than 65 professionals dedicated to providing custom database, Internet and GIS solutions, plans to open its new Boise office this month.

*BOB Trailers, Inc.* — This national leader in premium child strollers and specialty bicycle trailers moved its operations from California to Boise thanks to the city’s marketing of our affordable housing, attractive lifestyle and progressive business climate.

Streamlined permits and inspections. The new Development Services Advisory Committee, appointed by the Mayor and composed of architects, realtors, developers and builders, has helped Plan-
Boise City Economic Development Services revamp its procedures, cut red tape and help make Boise the best place in the valley to do business.

**Crossroads Initiative.** Redevelopment is vital if Boise hopes to curb sprawl and keep neighborhoods vital. Through the “Crossroads Initiative,” the Mayor is bringing together citizens and developers with the goal of making sure such redevelopment projects are right for existing neighborhoods.

**Harris Ranch.** Mayor Bieter personally intervened to get this Southeast Boise development project back on track. The resulting increase in residential capacity within the city will help combat costly sprawl.

**Downtown renaissance.** The largest downtown development project in many years, BoDo, opened in Fall 2005, bringing retail, restaurants, a multi-screen movie theater and hotel to the heart of the city. The city changed code to allow greater flexibility in downtown residential construction while still ensuring public safety. By the end of 2005, at least 1,500 units of downtown housing were in the development pipeline.

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**Protecting Livability**

“As we grow, we have to preserve that neighborhood feeling. We must continue to be a ‘city of neighborhoods,’ indeed, ‘a neighborhood city.’ And we can only be a neighborhood city by acting quickly, deliberately, and aggressively on many fronts at once. In short, we must design our future, be a ‘neighborhood city by design.’”

-- Mayor David H. Bieter

**Public safety priority.** Chief Mike Masterson reorganized the Boise Police Department, resulting in more police officers patrolling neighborhoods and providing direct services to citizens.

**Resources for livability.** The current budget funds more police officers and a doubling of scholarships for youth recreation programs. The City Council approved doubling funding for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Program (from $200,000 to $400,000), plus an additional $100,000 in one-time funding for 2006, to help neighborhoods get sidewalks, park improvements, and other amenities.

**New parks.** In November 2005, Boise accepted donation of the 70-acre Marianne Williams Park, another addition to its nationally acclaimed riverfront Greenbelt system. The City Council also funded development of Morris Hill Park, which will include a new off-leash dog area, and Peppermint Park, part of the package of city services provided to newly annexed residents of Southwest Boise.

**Improved library services.** A February 2006 bond vote for branch libraries won a strong majority.
Youth Partnership. In collaboration with BSU, Boise Public Schools, the Chamber of Commerce and United Way, the City of Boise launched a Youth Partnership to support youth programs. Mayor Bieter’s Education Summit led to new efforts by the city and schools to share facilities. Boise was one of 10 cities nationwide to be awarded a grant for Phase I of the CLEAR (City Leaders Engaged in After School Reform) Initiative. The Mayor appointed a committee of community representatives to collaborate on after-school opportunities for children and youth.

Social services. The City of Boise successfully completed the transition of Community House services to social service providers with expertise and resources to assist the homeless. As part of its commitment to address root causes, the city prepared to launch its “10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness,” addressing such issues as affordable housing, substance abuse treatment and mental health services, and economic and educational opportunities.

Improving air quality. The City of Boise took the lead in seeking federal Clean City designation to promote alternative-fuel efforts that will help combat air pollution. Mayor Bieter has directed all departments to purchase alternative-fuel vehicles when practical. The city also will emphasize “green” building standards in new facilities, such as the Foothills Learning Center and WaterShed Environmental Education Center.

Safety and civility. At the urging of neighborhoods and families, the City of Boise began enforcing the existing ban on alcohol consumption on the Boise River. An “educate first” policy sharply reduced citations and earned positive reviews from river users. The city launched a similar approach to downtown safety issues, working with business owners to focus resources before problems arise.

A blueprint for affordability

Mayor Bieter is president of the Blueprint for Good Growth, a multi-agency initiative to develop Ada County’s first county-wide land-use and transportation plan. When adopted and implemented, the plan will conserve open space, reduce automobile travel and roadway congestion, preserve air quality and save taxpayer dollars associated with high-cost sprawl.

The Blueprint’s vision for the Treasure Valley’s future, Community Choices, seeks to slow the rate of land consumed by growth, encourage development along mass-transit corridors, and reduce vehicle travel times. The City of Boise has already made progress toward these more compact development patterns, which tend to limit service costs and keep taxes low. A comparison of the current trend and Community Choices through the year 2030 illustrates the latter’s advantages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Trend</th>
<th>Community Choices</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>125,400 acres developed</td>
<td>42,200 acres developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20% of new homes at transit density</td>
<td>52% of new homes at transit density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.7 million daily vehicle miles of travel</td>
<td>19.6 million daily vehicle miles of travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>272,600 daily hours of delay</td>
<td>247,900 daily hours of delay</td>
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SOURCE: Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho
Keeping City Hall Accountable

“The people of Boise demand that we do the city’s business with the utmost integrity at all times. That is, after all, not a lot to ask. It simply means that every person in this municipal government – the Mayor and his staff, the department heads and all city employees – adopt an attitude not of privilege but of public service.”

-- Mayor David H. Bieter

New leadership for a new era. Since taking office, the Mayor has appointed new department heads in seven of the city’s 11 departments, bringing fresh perspectives and renewed energy to the business of municipal government. For its new police chief, the city launched the most extensive public-involvement effort ever undertaken for the hiring of a department head, including a 12-member citizen search committee and a public forum with the five finalists, broadcast live on TVTV.

High standards. The City Council adopted the Mayor’s recommendations to revise the city’s ethics policy. A new whistle-blower provision prohibits retaliation against employees who in good faith report suspected wrongdoing. A new five-member citizen Ethics Commission, first of its kind in Idaho, provides guidance and oversight on questions of employee conduct; its members are appointed by the Mayor, City Council, and city employees. A 24/7 Ethics Hotline (866-894-3423) was established for employees and citizens to report concerns and request inquiries.

Employee involvement. City workers now have greater opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their jobs and the services they provide to citizens. In addition to membership on the Ethics Commission, employees are represented on the new Policy Advisory Group, which reviews all city personnel policies and recommends changes to the Mayor and City Council, and a new Wages and Benefits Team, which annually reviews salary and benefit issues and offers suggestions to city leadership. Representa-

atives of police, fire and general employees participated in the 2005 strategic planning process. Employees, rather than department heads, now select representatives on the Employee Advisory Committee, a forum for communicating employee recommendations and concerns to departments, the Mayor, and City Council. The chair of the EAC also attends the Mayor’s weekly Executive Management Team meeting.

Improved internal communication. Mayor Bieter and the City Council have begun an open-door policy for city employees who wish to discuss concerns or provide suggestions directly. Almost two-thirds of the city’s workforce participated in an employee satisfaction survey, which the Mayor and Council will use to address various employee concerns. The Mayor instituted occasional “coffee talks” with employees and launched an employee Webcast, taking questions live from off-site city facilities. The Mayor communicates to city employees via a weekly e-mail and receives direct responses and suggestions.
Providing Leadership

“As I’ve walked around Boise, I’ve sensed a tremendous amount of good will in this city – good will, but also high expectations. And with that, we have a tremendous opportunity to do some truly amazing things.”

-- Mayor David H. Bieter

A valley on the move. Mayor Bieter became chair of the Valley Regional Transit Board of Directors in 2006 and is using that leadership position to promote and improve transportation options throughout the Treasure Valley. A coalition of business, neighborhood, and government representatives is developing local funding options for transportation for submission to the 2007 Legislature.

Detox services. In early 2005, the City of Boise hosted a valley-wide summit to address the need for community detox services. From that meeting, Mayor Bieter established the Detox Steering Committee to explore options, identify resources and engage partners to improve detox services.

A Celebration of Thanks. With former Govs. Cecil Andrus and Phil Batt as honorary co-chairs, the “Treasure Valley’s Best” steering committee formed by Mayor Bieter sponsored a series of activities to welcome local troops home from Iraq. Zoo Boise hosted a free evening of activities for soldiers’ families. The troops were also special guests at the 2005 MPC Computers Bowl, with 1,700 free tickets distributed to military members and their families, a hospitality tent and a post-game fireworks show.

Town and gown. Mayor Bieter, in cooperation with Boise State University, established the Boise State University / City of Boise Working Group to explore issues and collaborate on programs of benefit to the entire community. Among other issues, the group has addressed community colleges and workforce training, neighborhood issues south of BSU, and expansion of the city’s geothermal heating utility to the campus.

Fall for Boise. Working with the Downtown Boise Association, Capital City Development Corp., and city and state visitors bureaus, the Mayor and the Boise City Arts Commission launched a successful annual autumn “celebration of arts and community” to highlight and promote multiple arts, cultural and neighborhood events.

Office of City Historian. A joint effort with Boise State University provides historical activities and research related to our city’s rich heritage. Staffed by BSU graduate students, the office has developed a Web site on city history, publications on Boise’s ethnicity and water-rights history, and City Hall workshops on history topics. The city historian, in cooperation with the Office of the Mayor, also relaunched the Fettuccine Forum, a free monthly public affairs series, with great success.

Save the Old Courthouse. Mayor Bieter joined opponents of plans to demolish the old Ada County Courthouse, a Depression-era, art deco-style structure east of the state Capitol. In testimony before a legislative committee, the Mayor urged that this irreplaceable part of Boise’s history be preserved and remodeled rather than torn down. In 2005, the Legislature voted to study the issue further.

Additional copies of this report are available at www.cityofboise.org/Departments/Mayor