



## 2018 State of the City “A City Making a Difference”

Members of the City Council, City Directors, City Employees, and Citizens of Idaho Falls, welcome. As has become tradition, I stand before you this evening to offer a report on the state of our great city.

### Introduction

A city is only as good as its leadership team. Some members of the team are the officials elected by the public. The rest of the members of the team are hired by the mayor. We have a great team. Year-in and year-out this group accomplishes much and truly makes a difference in the lives of Idaho Falls residents.

For four years now I have stood here and commended to you the talent and skill of the city’s administrators—also known as Department Directors. And tonight, rather than listen to me narrate the accomplishments of the past year, I thought you might rather enjoy hearing from those members of the team who played key roles in producing our city’s many successes. With a little help from video technology, you will have the opportunity to hear briefly from each director.

First, allow me to offer some context. Idaho Falls has 11 city departments. I have mentioned before that we have what I believe is the most complex and varied city government in the state. The video you are about to see demonstrates the wide range of expertise our city comprises.

And please, allow me to thank the professionals at i.e. productions for their assistance with this creative effort—they accomplished a lot in a short time frame.

[Roll video **2017 Milestones and Accomplishments**]

### A City Making a Difference

As you can see, the City of Idaho Falls has a lot going on—we always do—24/7. City employees make a difference every day in so many ways. From our linemen, to sanitation workers, snow plow operators, mechanics, animal caregivers, highly educated librarians, an urban forester, SWAT team members, search and rescue team members, fire prevention specialists, the cemetery sexton, the federal grants administrator, prosecutors, building inspectors, IT specialists, accountants, and even elected officials—the work we do is highly specialized.

This army of city professionals works to ensure that the lights go on and the water runs out of the faucet and down the drain efficiently. They work to make sure we have the latest books and access to sports and health and fitness options. They work to make sure the planes can land and that schoolchildren know officers they can trust. They show up when cars collide and when we have medical emergencies. They work to answer citizen questions and keep streets free of leaves and snow. They prepare gravesites and plant trees and preserve our city's history and it goes on and on and on.

City employees strive to anticipate problems and solve them before they become issues. When the unanticipated happens, they roll up their sleeves and figure it out. And if something does slip through the cracks, we learn from it. Our city is a very healthy organization. There can be no disputing the fact that the everyday work performed by city employees makes a difference in the lives of Idaho Falls residents.

### **City-wide Successes**

However, city employees are not the only ones who work hard solving problems and meeting needs. The qualities that make our city organization strong and healthy are the very same ones that guarantee success in our market-based local economy.

The recent political campaign included debate about economic growth in Idaho Falls. Some claimed key business was moving away from our city. I wish to set the record straight when I say that nothing could be further from the truth. A very quick glance at recent notable business events reveals many significant business successes that translate into healthy economic growth for Idaho Falls.

#### **Private Sector Successes.**

- *Idahoan Foods* went public with the details of the \$30-million expansion of its potato processing capabilities on North River Road. Though the plant is located just barely outside of city boundaries, the World Headquarters for Idahoan is in the heart of downtown; their success is our success
- By the same token, Melaleuca just celebrated its first \$2 Billion year. This company is a large regional employer and their success is meaningful to IF citizens as well. What is remarkable is that it wasn't all that long ago that we were celebrating their first \$1 Billion year. That kind of growth is powerful and noteworthy.
- This past fall I participated in the groundbreaking for the *Idaho Falls Cardio-Renal Center* location on Sunnyside. This 25,000 sq-ft, \$15 Million, full-service medical facility is expected to open next fall.
- Continuing with the medical theme, major new work at *Mountain View Hospital* is coming in 2018. The city's building department recently processed permit paperwork for a \$65 million, 88-bed expansion. There is more to come on that.
- Tokyo-based *Sakae Casting* opened its IF office in April. In this first year they have been busy collaborating with CAES to bring their unique technology to bear in the nuclear industry—it could greatly impact how we handle storage of spent fuel. Sakae Casting recently received an I-GEM grant from the Idaho State Department of Commerce. It is good

to be the kind of city that can foster an international company that is doing meaningful cutting-edge research such as this. The possibilities for future commerce are significant.

- Industry leader *Northwest Cosmetics Labs* held an open-house to share its recent expansion earlier in the year. Inventors of the Cosmovation Process, this world leader in personal beauty products absolutely will see more growth and more jobs added to their company in the coming months and years.
- The INL received approval to site two new buildings along University Blvd— the Collaborative Computing Center (C3) and Cybercore--Both of these will bring high-paying jobs, interesting research and incredible new opportunities to our area.
- As mentioned in the video, *The Broadway* will open in 2018. The increase in commerce to the downtown area will be real. It is downtown business growth that is helping to drive demand for downtown housing. This is why the renovation of the old Bonneville Hotel will contribute greatly to the downtown economy.
- We made an unofficial and cursory count of small and medium-sized business activity in 2017—new openings, expansions or relocations. Without much effort at all we identified over 25 expansions and/or relocations inside of our city since the Spring of 2017.

Even with all of this success, not every big expansion that will bring in new jobs and fosters local commerce has come from the business sector.

### **Community Success.**

- One of the biggest things to hit all of Eastern Idaho this past year was the establishment of the College of Eastern Idaho. Not only is every new semester bringing more students onto the Idaho Falls and satellite campuses, the college also recently announced a \$1.73 million legacy gift from Bill and Shirley Maeck. The money will be spent locally to enhance CEI programs.
- Earlier this year the new Idaho Falls Community Family Clinic opened to the public. The clinic, with its bilingual Spanish-speaking staff, offers medical services to low-income individuals in our community. The new clinic contains 16 exam rooms, and is more than double the size of the old clinic.
- And EIRMC's parent company, the Hospital Corporation of America, gave final approval for establishing a residency program in Idaho Falls. Starting in July, ten new internal medical residents will arrive in Idaho Falls. This vital training will bring new talent to all of Eastern Idaho which will have a tremendous positive impact on the shortage of trained medical professionals throughout the region. The program is slated to expand in future years.

## **2018: City Opportunities**

So many opportunities for our city. And so many people and businesses whose talent, skills and vision make a difference. As we look to 2018 and beyond, you can rest assured that this city is not sitting idle or resting on its 2017 laurels.

**Heritage Park.** The local Rotary Club—responsible for donations that have supported much renovation of our river walk and greenbelt over the years will be celebrating its 100-year anniversary with a major donation to one of the city's newest Parks, Heritage Park. This supplements the generosity of the Smith Family and Snake River Landing. Combined with city

contributions, we now have enough resource to break ground on this river-themed park in 2018—and what is sure to become another jewel along the river.

**Zoo Education Center.** Plans for building the center are rolling forward as we speak—this three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar project was made possible by generous donations from *Bill Maeck* and the *TPZS*.

**Idaho Falls Civic Center for the Performing Arts.** Note the new and elegant name. The citizen committee guiding management of this community landmark facilitated a two-year, Phase I renovation with much of the work being done this coming summer. The city will be able to move forward with these necessary upgrades and repairs because of yet another donation—a matching donation from—you guessed it—Bill Maeck. Future phases to the back of the house (behind the stage) and front of the house (entrance and lobby) have been discussed to further strengthen this facility in future years. Several local experts have donated their time to this project thus far including an interior designer and a graphic artist as well as a couple of architects. We gladly welcome contributions from any and all fans of the arts who want to be a part of continuing the glorious legacy of this building as it fulfills its public mission to make the blessing of the arts accessible to everyone in our city.

**Hiring.** In 2017 the IFPD promoted the first woman to the rank of sergeant. I know Sergeant Marley and have seen her in action. I do not believe this will be the end of her career path. I so appreciate the example she is setting for her fellow officers, for women in the profession, and for young girls who can look to her excellent example. I am told the IFFD is not far behind; I fully expect we will be adding more women to the city's public safety ranks in the coming months.

**IDA.** Our Airport will begin an expansion project to include upgrading the baggage claim area 2018. And as you heard, progress has been made on attracting a new Seattle route with Alaska Airlines. Stay tuned.

There is more still planned for 2018, but time does not permit me to go into detail. Please visit the city website and like our Facebook pages to stay informed. Here is a quick list of other things we are planning or will be exploring in the coming year:

- A community celebration of Engineering Week in February
- Another Community Roundtable Discussion
- A series of Administrative Changes
  - New agenda-management software
  - Training for Boards Committees and Commissions
  - Development of additional CRCs
- 2018 will be the first full year for us to use Priority-Based Budgeting
- Renewed use of Neighborhood Watch Programs
- Further development of Ryder Park
- More public Electric Vehicle Charging stations as part of a statewide initiative and with the goal of eliminating range anxiety as more and more electric cars take to our highways.
- Expansion of our more than-a-decade-old fiber optic network to promote residential connectivity.
- Enhanced and simplified Code Enforcement
- Work on a Regional Public Safety Training Center for Police and Fire Professionals

- Continued road improvements and safety enhancements will be part of every construction season.

## City Challenges

Even with all these pages and pages of community success and plans, I can and should also point out that Idaho Falls also faces hurdles and challenges in the coming years. In 2018 we will begin to tackle them in earnest.

- A new **Police HQ** is next on the list of big ticket items. A new facility is much needed. A citizen commission formed way back in 2007 to study how to address this need. That committee was discontinued—not because they decided that there was no need—but rather because the recession hit and at that time city leaders essentially froze city expenditures and new projects. As we study the project now, we know that a first-rate facility will be more costly than the regular city budget can accommodate. At this time, turning to the public for bonding authority is a strong possibility. I invite IF citizens to stay tuned. We must get it right the first time. The Council Members and I will have no appetite for spending tens of thousands of dollars to run a public vote more than once.
- When it comes to **City Recreation Facilities**, our new City Council faces some tough questions. Do we repair and renovate knowing the existing pool facility is too small to serve community needs? Do we build a second pool to meet that demand or do we close the current one and build a larger single aquatic facility? If we build new, should it be a stand-alone pool or one that is part of a larger public recreation and sports complex? And what of a city-recreation center? The 80-year old one we have now is well-used; it is also small, leaky and falling apart. Of course we are seeking creative means of funding and seeking grants, but at some point, the Council will have to decide how to proceed. And we haven't forgotten that we could use a second sheet of ice in this city—perhaps even a year-round sheet of ice. Those who are up at 5 am or up until 2 am just to get their skate time in won't let us forget. Our current ice arena is in use almost 'round the clock from October to April. Many of our citizens drive hundreds of miles every summer simply to access practice ice. It would be nice to serve them here in the city.
- **Water Resources.** To anyone watching the statewide discussion of water resources, it is no surprise to hear me say that water concerns are real. This is a time of transition for our state. Fresh, potable water is key for city development and growth. Idaho's cities are challenged to obtain enough water for growth while not infringing upon water needed for agriculture. Idaho Falls is right smack dab in the middle of this statewide conversation.

Other states in the west have resolved their water issues in the marketplace; and their available water costs a lot. In Idaho, we have somewhat resisted this expensive trend, knowing that shrewd and smart management practices can maximize availability and keep Idaho water prices relatively low. There is a competitive advantage in this strategy. I firmly believe there is more we can do to maximize supply and wisely manage our water at both the city and state levels. But the time may be coming when we citizens will be called upon to manage our own water use. Right now, Idaho Falls water is more affordable than water in just about any other large Idaho city or western US city you can think of.

In the past, city water managers were not faced with the limited and/or expensive availability as we are now. This is a new challenge. But all can rest assured that we will continue to plan and manage cleverly in the face of new city growth and changing water availability.

- **Transportation Corridors.** We are of course correct to be focused on growth. Recently, Idaho was named the fastest growing state in the nation. Much of that is occurring in Ada County. But even the modest growth in Bonneville County still translates into more demand on city infrastructure. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than at rush hour along I-15 where we regularly have traffic backing up off the exit ramps and into the travel lanes. This clearly is not safe. The Idaho Transportation Department considers Exit 119 to be the most challenging traffic situation in our area. In 2018, ITD will be kicking off a year-long effort to examine the busy I-15 corridor. City officials will be very active in that conversation and we will keep you informed about the opportunities for public input.
- Finally, though not a city project per se, the failure of the recent school bond to achieve the super-majority threshold needed to redesign District 91 high schools indeed presents a community challenge. The Trustees have gone back to work on the very real problems presented by aging and diminished facilities. Approving a plan that meets 21<sup>st</sup> century student needs is vital to our community's long-term success. And, ensuring that the historic IFHS neighborhoods are properly supported and redeveloped should the campus relocate is another vital opportunity. Idaho Falls city leaders stand ready to assist. The IFHS campus is quite literally (geographically) the heart of our city. We all must take care of it.

A quick word about how we can best tackle these challenges. It takes citizen involvement. We all know that most public problems are nuanced. The really is no “easy” button. We cannot afford to be tempted into thinking that public solutions are a simple matter of having enough political will or a strong commitment to an ideology. Those might help. They may even be necessary; but alone they are not sufficient. The truth is that it takes a lot of work and talent to tackle public problems. Sometimes it requires compromise. This is nothing new. Such is life. Most problems require the old-rolled up sleeves, elbow-grease and ingenuity treatment—that applies no matter what kind of problem we may face.

I can also say that one of the most encouraging and delightful lessons of the previous four years for me has been that citizen support allows us to do more than just solve our public problems, it allows us to accomplish great public things.

To my more political friends, I believe this is the very essence of local control—local residents working together to achieve local goals and make a local difference. In 2018 and beyond we have every reason to expect even more city-wide accomplishment with even more citizen involvement. I look forward to it.

**Idaho Falls Leadership**

Some have asked why I bring federal, state, region and private sector concerns into my conversations about our city. The question carries the suggestion that we should not become involved in things that are not city-led. To them I say that growth in every sector brings with it a need for careful and visionary leadership in our city and region. It is vital that we both understand and carry our weight in the myriad of relationships in which Idaho Falls is involved.

We are the largest Idaho city east of Boise. We are a hub for a tri-state region for retail, research, entertainment, arts and culture, medical care, and now, affordable education. And while we do not grow the potatoes and barley crops inside city limits, the commerce associated with these agricultural products certainly impacts our city. Our welcome and unique relationships with the US Departments of Defense, Energy and Homeland Security also shape who we are and the quality of opportunities available in Idaho Falls.

We become involved in outside activity when it involves our city. We are a hub that provides leadership, generates opportunity and shapes it to Eastern Idaho's advantage. We house the banks, the stores, the labs, the hospital rooms and the classrooms. Responsible city leaders must be aware of city, region, state, and federal trends and events. How else can we take advantage of them? I know of no other way we can be prepared or poised to act when opportunity comes knocking.

The SMR Project embodies this well. We continue to work on bringing this project to fruition. Idaho Falls did not invent the technology or submit it to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for vetting. We do not control DOE decisions to fund SMR research or the individual council decisions in municipalities throughout six western states who are anxious to be a part of this project. We do not control the INL or Secretary of Energy in their decisions to support the research and bring it to the marketplace. But we, as an interested party, have been aware and involved all along the way.

There is more to do for this project to be fully viable. For us, a successful project will mean another path to securing reliable and affordable carbon-free energy for Eastern Idaho. But it is about more than just generating electricity, improving local resiliency and a few hundred excellent jobs. It will also bring additional training and research opportunities. If we are successful, we will have secured for Idaho Falls a global leadership position. What a fitting honor for the city that hosts the lab that harnessed the world's first peaceful nuclear power over 66 years ago. Plentiful, affordable, clean and reliable baseload energy. Talk about a city making a difference!

## Conclusion

This past year, my office received many comments and thank you notes from visitors who visited Idaho Falls from throughout the world. A very kind note came from Kendall & Aiden who live in Henderson, Nevada. Here is an excerpt from their message:

*Thank you and your beautiful city for hosting thousands of people from around the world for the Great American Eclipse. It was a lovely place for viewing the event. Everyone we came across from police and city workers to workers in hotels, restaurants, gas stations were friendly and helpful. Even a Canadian family traveling through not knowing about the eclipse was fixed up buy a gas station attendant with safety glasses and safety instructions and information about locations for good viewing.*

... [T]hanks again for the wonderful party and measures to keep everyone safe.

Don't you just love that? A gas station employee took it upon him-or-herself to make people feel welcome. THAT is what it means to MAKE A DIFFERENCE here in Idaho Falls! That is who we are and why I love living here. Idaho Falls is an exciting place. It is a friendly place. We are growing and we are prospering and doing so while still managing our public resources responsibly and still maintaining those core values that made me want to raise my family here in the first place.

I know I am not alone in feeling this way. I invite each and every IF citizen to continue doing what it takes to make a positive difference in the lives of all those who visit our city as well as for those who live here all year long. Shovel a sidewalk , rake some leaves, pick up some litter, coach a team.

As we move forward into 2018, I encourage citizens to do still more. Please become involved in city processes—from budget to policy to planning. Now you might be wondering just how does one become more involved? Here are some ideas:

- The City Council and I meet in this chamber several times a month. Come watch the deliberations and discussion. You're bound to learn something about the city you didn't know before. All meetings for 2018 are posted on the city website. You can even sign up for notifications.
- For those who can't attend in person, we live stream all of our Monday afternoon work sessions and our regular Thursday night meetings.
- The website also contains an application form for those interested in applying to serve on city Boards, Committees and Commissions. Just fill it out and return it to City Hall. We will contact you if we have an opening that matches your interest and skills.
- City Officials—That is Council Members, Directors and I—are always available to speak with citizens who wish to share comments, concerns or suggestions. Call to make an appointment.
- On May 1<sup>st</sup> of this year we will again host *Budget Watch*—a public meeting at the library where we all will be on hand to answer your questions and take your suggestions about any city policy or program.

I will close with the same simple but true statement I shared last year: The state of our city is strong. Idaho Falls' future is bright. And I could not be more proud to serve you all and to be a part of this great community.

Thank you.