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Boise Exploration Project

Dominique Elliott
Department of Accountancy, Boise State University

Lauren Garrett
Department of Economics, Boise State University

Max Greenlee
Department of Political Science, Boise State University

Ricardo Malo
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Boise State University

Sydney Reed
Department of Anthropology, Boise State University

The Boise Exploration Project

Dominique Elliott, Lauren Garrett, Max Greenlee, Sydney Reed, and Ricardo Malo

Innovate@Boise State Challenge

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Executive Summary

To being the innovate challenge, we were presented with five undeveloped properties that we needed to turn into something innovative, filled the needs of the community, was feasible, and grounded in evidence. Our wish was to build something so that Downtown Boise could become a place that truly fostered a sense of community, and culture, while emphasizing education by bringing together everyone from adults to children, students to businessmen, and urban to suburban. This vision was formalized through the construction of our idea: to build a large, interactive Boise City Museum. This museum would take visitors on an interactive journey through the world, from dinosaurs, to Idaho history, to space exploration. We wanted visitors to experience education, to not only learn about history in a classroom; therefore, the Boise City Museum would offer an IMAX experience as well as a public-access planetarium. These innovations would not only allow potential partners like Boise State University, Microsoft, and Hewlett Packard the chance to have a foothold in the community, but also they would inspire young students through sponsoring an exhibit. However, our vision did not stop with the Boise City Museum, we wanted to foster all of the arts, so we added an amphitheatre that could house different plays, local orchestras and support other arts. Next to the amphitheatre, a shopping center called The Marketplace is set; it is a place that will be supportive to small, local businesses and restaurants. This place will have beautiful architecture to provide a breathtaking first glimpse of Boise when exiting the connector. Other innovative aspects to our design was the addition of pedestrian bridges to encourage walking and bicycling; also a parking garage, to help address some of the space issues business people downtown experience. Our design, the Boise Exploration Project, is a large scale, innovative project designed around Boise's strengths as a community.

OUR VISION

Boise, Idaho, is a beautiful city, full of culture, prospering businesses, and a strong sense of community. Recently, this wonderful place to live has experienced many young people leaving. Hence, city-makers have asked our group, the Boise Exploration Project, to make Boise more "livable." This presented the question: What is livable? We, as the Boise Exploration Project, defined livable as a place where community, culture, education, business, and the arts were all fostered in a positive environment.

In addressing this problem, our team considered various sources to determine the best way to make Boise the "most livable city in the world." During the first two days of the competition, we heard from the following leaders in the community: Mayor Bieter, President Kustra, and developer Mark Rivers. It struck our group how all of them mentioned arts and culture as a key foundation for the city. Mayor Bieter said one thing to always keep in mind was the "city soul", which he believes is related to cultural events that celebrate Boise's uniqueness. Boise has "authority" in the areas of art and culture, according to Mark Rivers. President Kustra also believed that culture was an essential part of the Boise spirit.

With their speeches in mind, we focused on issues related to livability touched on in the 2009 Boise Citizen Survey. One statistic that stood out was the percentage of people who believed that the arts and cultural programs in Boise were "excellent." In 2009, this figure representing citizens rating culture as "excellent" was 28%, which is comparably better than the national average (21%) and the Mountain West (20%), but Boise's rating is behind the average for a city of comparable size (36%). Essentially, this statistic tracks with the consensus from the speakers: Boise does very well with arts and culture, but has room for improvement. Many of our team did informal surveys of our friends and family, who also thought that downtown would

benefit from a place where both children and adults could be entertained and develop a sense of community. This research helped formalize our wish: that Downtown Boise could become a place that truly fostered a sense of community, culture, while emphasizing education by bringing together everyone from adults to children, students to businessmen, and urban to suburban.

THE BOISE CITY MUSEUM

The challenge was to provide Boise with something that is innovative, that it does not have, but that will make it more livable. To the Boise Exploration Project, the downtown area of Boise is cold, a place for businesses, but mostly filled with business people in cars. We do not see many people walking the streets with their families on a regular basis. We feel that family, fun, entertainment, and education make a place livable. Therefore, our vision was to create an environment that fosters learning and creativity and where people of all ages can be entertained. This goal is accomplished by the construction of the Boise City Museum. This interactive museum will provide a learning center for everyone in the community.

Boise's cultural authority has much to offer, but many do not get to see it in this light. However, the Boise City Museum will provide not only the community with a common identity, but something that distinguishes Boise against the rest of the northwest. This interactive museum will feature a hands-on history of the world while incorporating Idaho history as well. This innovation in education will bring different types of education under one roof. The new museum will be open to everyone of every age. By partnering with Boise State University, the museum can teach in a fun environment and inspire young people through the sponsored exhibits. The Boise City Museum would provide Boise State with some classrooms in exchange for research projects that can be viewed by the public. These laboratories would be on the second floor of the museum with an adjacent classroom for ease of access for students and

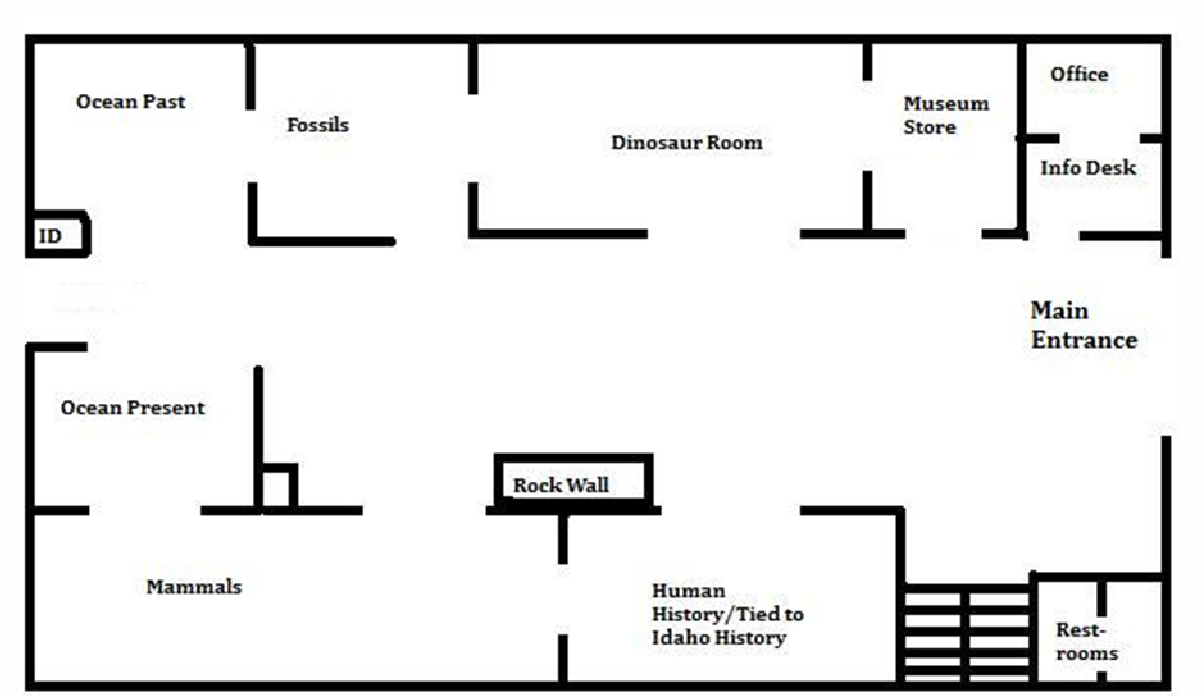

Figure 1 Ground Floor

teachers; these laboratories however, would have windows the entire length of the room where observers could view the projects first hand.

The interactive Boise City Museum is an innovation in learning. The first floor would have interactive exhibits following the dinosaurs, to the oceans, to mammals and finally, to humans (Figure 1). These interactive exhibits provide information people of every age will be interested to experience. However, to stay innovative, the exhibits would be rotated every few months; this is also to keep fresh information to visitors, and keep the people who live in Boise coming back to the Boise City Museum. The second floor of the Boise City Museum will take visitors through a learning journey like none they have experienced before. In partnership with Boise State University, patrons will be able to see actual university researchers perform lab tests in real time. Near these observation windows, visitors will be able to interact with the various exhibits. The second-floor exhibits will include: Raptor Lab and interactive bird center, Mineral Lab and interactive soil/gem center, the Engineering Lab and interactive physics center, and

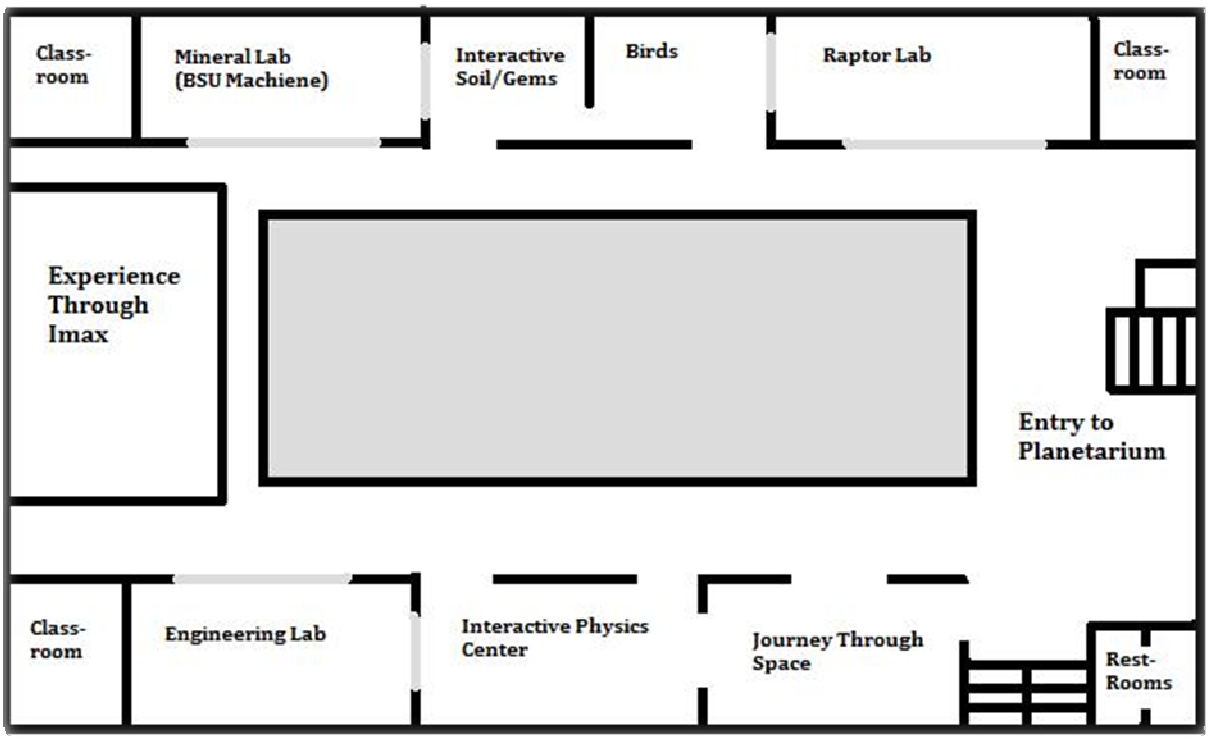

Figure 2 Second Floor

experience a journey through space. These fun and educational exhibits will allow Boise State University to directly influence the community (Figure 2). Patrons can also experience education in an enormous IMAX theatre; the IMAX would feature beautiful, high definition, educational movies so the visitors can experience the valuable information first-hand. Along with the IMAX experience, visitors will be able to experience space directly through the Boise City Museum's very own public planetarium. This planetarium will not only be the focal point of the building, but it will provide Boiseians with an entirely new identity as they see their place in the night sky. While Idaho has a few planetariums to offer educators and students in those particular study areas, the Boise City Museum planetarium will be open to the entire public.

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES

When surveyed, our friends and family unanimously said that some mode of public transportation was necessary for Boise to be more livable. According to Mayor Bieter, Idaho has

so much to offer its residents in terms of pleasant weather, but many Boiseians do not take advantage of it. Therefore, the Boise Exploration Project wanted to incorporate Boise's vision of becoming less dependent on cars. Many people will only come to downtown in their vehicle and never walk throughout this beautiful place. To help solve this problem, we designed pedestrian bridges to enter the Boise City Museum Park to encourage the community to walk or ride bikes more than drive; these bridges will be placed over Front Street, Myrtle Street, 11th Street, and 13th Street to provide the easiest access for all people downtown to use this innovative resource. We hope these bridges will help the community become involved in Boise and the athletic culture in which we have authority.

PARKING GARAGE AND PARK

In his presentation to Innovate participants, Mayor Bieter discussed some things that Boise was in desperate need. Among the mentioned concerns, Mayor Bieter stated that parking was a large concern for many Boiseians. Many are upset with the parking situations downtown and feel there are not many options. The Boise Exploration Project decided to use plot two, so there is much more space than necessary to build a large museum. Therefore, the Exploration Project decided to utilize the dirt parking lot currently there, and replace it with an underground parking garage. This parking garage will be large, but not above the ground, two stories of it will be below the ground. This is to make Boise more aesthetically pleasing to Boiseians and people that visit Boise. The garage will be functional, but we will add a park next to the parking garage. Parks are a signature of Boise, because it is known for its beautiful outdoors. The Boise Exploration Project mission is to encompass all of Boise's strengths as well as add in the new features. This park will be the location where the pedestrian bridges will meet. People will be able to walk directly from downtown to this park. Not only will this provide a place for people

to relax and enjoy the outdoors, but it will be a majestic entrance to the new, innovative Boise City Museum.

AMPHITHEATRE

After the meeting with Mayor Bieter and President Kustra, the Boise Exploration Project decided that a large part of their concerns for the future were related to the arts and culture. Mayor Bieter expressed a city-wide need for a performing arts venue, preferably between the size of the Egyptian and the Morrison Center. So as a group, we felt that an amphitheatre would be a creative attribute to our vision. The Boise Exploration Project felt that Boise needed an amphitheatre with a large stage in front, especially suitable for plays, a middle sitting area, and an upper seating area overlooking the stage. The amount of seating in the amphitheatre would be in the range of 800 to 1,200 seats. This amphitheatre would allow wide variety of shows and stunning performances for the population of Boise to enjoy.

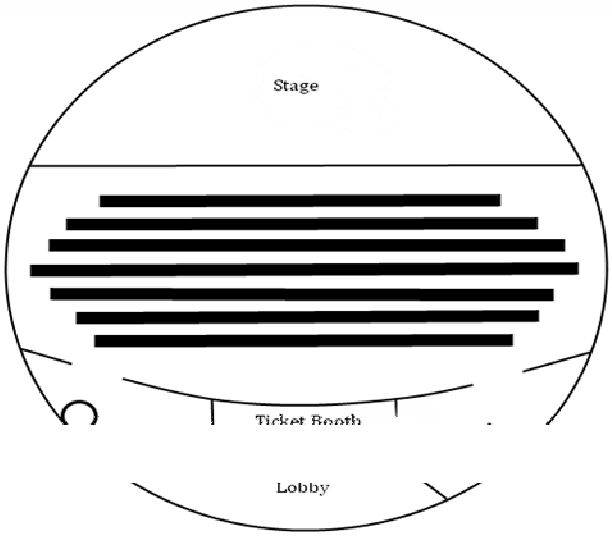

Figure 3 Ground Floor

Another innovative aspect of unveiling the new performing arts venue would be the advantage of offering this new setting to large, local performing groups like the Boise Phil Harmonic and Opera Idaho Incorporated. Boise State performing arts department would also be encouraged to use the amphitheatre for future concerts and high school programs such as Honor Band, All State, Seminars, etc. This large space would provide a great cultural and artistic experience for our community and for Boise State University to cross the river to become involved in downtown.

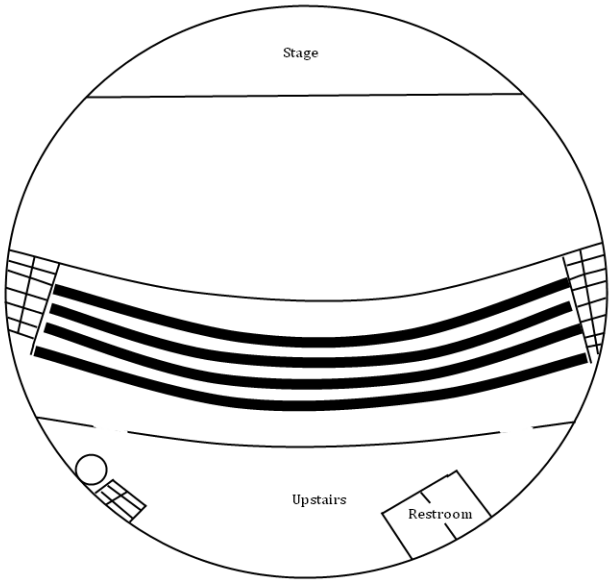

Figure 4 Second Floor

Along with the great entertainment that may take place within this theater we considered the architectural element of the building was very important as well. The Boise Exploration Project decided to carry over the architecture of the museum over to the amphitheatre. With this spherical shape, we have a unique addition to the gateway of downtown Boise.

THE MARKETPLACE

To expound upon the creative ideas with the amphitheatre, we decided to add a collection of restaurants and stores to help expand Boise's small business presence, called the Marketplace. We envisioned this area to be an oasis for locally owned businesses and restaurants. A great contributor of this project would be the Think Boise First group. This very innovative group provides advertising and other support for Boise's small, local businesses. This marketplace will also provide opportunities for local Idaho farmers and craftsmen to have small booths in the pleasant courtyard on a monthly basis. The Marketplace would offer a great opportunity for Boiseians to make a direct, positive change in the local economy and support the community (Figures 5-6).

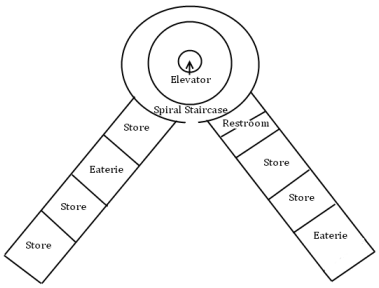

Figure 5 Ground Floor

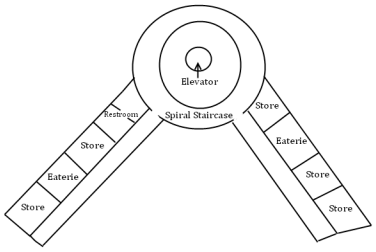

Figure 6 Top Floor/Balcony

FUNDING, COSTS, AND EXPECTED REVENUES

The Boise Exploration Project can be funded in a variety of ways. First, there are certain public funding options. According to Capitol City Development Corporation's official website, its mission is "to invest public funds in business districts and neighborhoods needing economic development and revitalization." The site we have chosen is located within the River Myrtle Redevelopment District, so the area does qualify as needing economic development. Moreover, parts of our project would fall directly into what CCDC deems necessary to development.

CCDC has helped the city by constructing projects such as parking garages and various other street improvements. Our project includes both a parking garage, which is located in a spot which CCDC has planned for a garage already, and two pedestrian bridges. These bridges would be a great asset to pedestrian traffic crossing the busy, dangerous streets of Front and Myrtle. Both of these projects would benefit the City as a whole, in addition to the area in question.

Outside of CCDC funding, there are certain options to consider. First, the garage and pedestrian bridge could benefit from a public-private partnership. The parking garage, according to Reed Construction Data, would cost around six million dollars to implement, and the park and landscaping would cost approximately one million dollars. Hence, supportive funding for these projects would include sponsorship from the developer of the commercial area as well as other community business sponsors, possibly in return for naming rights or other advertising. The pedestrian bridges, costing around one million according to Reed Construction Data, could also be partially funded through the personalized brick method, proven to be effective through the Boise Center on the Grove Plaza. Other funding for the bridge might come from federal transportation grants or state funding.

Although the Boise City Museum is the most costly project we have proposed, it also has the most funding opportunities available. According to Reed Construction Data, the Boise City Museum would cost about forty million dollars. Obviously, some private investment would be necessary. The actual museum activities could be taken over by a nonprofit organization such as the Discovery Center of Idaho, but some large corporate sponsors would be the best way to get much of the funding. Companies like HP or Simplot would be excellent candidates. In fact, this space is already in consideration for a community oriented “parkscape” called JUMP, commissioned by Simplot. This project is currently under review and reconsideration, in

conference with the Mayor and City Council. In addition to large private contributions, the museum would be able to provide some return on funding through revenue, so a loan might be a possibility. Boise State University might also provide some assistance because one floor of the museum is devoted to classrooms and research through the university. This space could be utilized as a foothold for the university downtown, enabling many colleges to use the space for any number of subjects. Finally, some federal grants through agencies like the National Science Foundation might be applicable, especially for the academic research portions.

Finally, the funding of the Marketplace has the least amount of options, but is also one of the least costly. Since this is mainly a commercial area, a real estate developer would probably front most of the building cost. The investment would be recouped by charging rent to the tenants. However, the auditorium space would be maintained by a nonprofit organization, and might be eligible for federal grants through the National Endowment for the Arts. Also, private donations could be instrumental in procuring funding for this building, just like it would be for the museum, for example, the Morrison Center would not be what it is today without charity.

Museum Revenue

Since the Boise City Museum, the Marketplace, the amphitheatre, and parking garage are so extensive; it is not easy to pinpoint what the major sources of revenue will be. For the museum's revenue we suspect that part of it will be from the on-site gift shop, admissions, memberships, and other charitable programs. As for other means of revenue, the museum can earn revenue by running museum programs for young students during the year. Corporate partnerships can be formed with HP, Microsoft and Boise State University.

By partnerships with Microsoft, HP and Boise State University, they may place an exhibit or open lab for people to view. For example, Microsoft has been being testing an

application called Microsoft Surface. This program is a futuristic and interactive exhibit that uses a touch screen to perform a variety of tasks, from playing games to researching and studying satellite images for NASA. The other partnership the Boise City Museum will value the most is the affiliation with Boise State University. The museum will include classrooms, laboratories, and interactive learning exhibits that are both ran and used by Boise State students. These exhibits and labs will give Boise State University a foothold in downtown and with the community in general. Visitors will be inspired by the exhibits and hopefully want to visit this museum time and time again to preview new studies brought to the community by Boise State University.

After studying prices of some of the larger museums around the country, most provided an average price range in which the Boise City Museum will adopt. The following table provided is what the Boise Exploration Project feels is a close approximation of admission prices:

Age Groups	Museum	IMAX	Museum + IMAX	Museum + IMAX + Planetarium
Adults	$11	$11	$16	$21
Junior (3-18) Student w/ID	$6	$6	$10	$14
Senior (65+)	$6	$6	$10	$14

Membership Types	Price (One Payment)	Price (Monthly Payments)
Individual	$95	$8
Family	$190	$16

*Memberships are eligible for special pricing options.

Marketplace Revenue

The Marketplace will foster small businesses and bring in revenues for not only themselves, but the local economy. Think Boise First would be linked to the small businesses in the Marketplace. This market will help many locally owned businesses gain exposure and help the struggling Boise economy. Local farmers and craftsmen would also benefit by participating in a weekly farmers market.

Amphitheatre Revenue

The amphitheatre will be the star attraction of the Marketplace. This amphitheatre would house large bands, local bands, plays, and perhaps even Boise State University performing arts. These events held will earn revenue through tickets.

Parking Garage Revenue

The parking garage is going to be very accessible both to people that work downtown, and the patrons of the Marketplace and the Boise City Museum. The garage needs to stay competitive, and we are trying to discourage drivers to the museum; therefore Boise Exploration Project proposes the prices as follows:

Time	Prices
First Hour	Free
After the First Hour	$2.50 (per/hr.)
Full Day	$12.00

These prices are comparable to other parking areas downtown; though we anticipate this location will bring in added revenue.

CONCLUSION

We realize that the Boise Exploration Project is ambitious but we feel such a large project is necessary to showcase all that Boise has to offer. This idea of the interactive Boise City Museum, Amphitheatre, Marketplace, parking garage, and inventive pedestrian bridges is new and innovative. Based on our extensive research this project will satisfy the community's need for more of the arts and culture downtown. All we need is the cooperation of all participants to make this idea a reality, thereby making Boise the most livable city in the world.