Quintessential Boise: an architectural journey

Hummel and Woodward
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Idaho's capital city emerged from a gold rush supply point at the foot of the Boise Mountains at a crossroads of the Oregon Trail. Opposite: Boise City Hall plaza fountain below the US Bank Building; Next: Vince's Barber Shop in Hyde Park.
Quintessential Boise is dedicated to the proposition that streets and their buildings are keys to the life of a city and that good architecture, like good books, should engage the public in readable and provocative ways. The book emerged from coffee-house conversations among an architect, a newspaper columnist, a newspaper reporter and a history professor. Charles Hummel, the architect, is the son, grandson and nephew of men who designed some of Boise’s most iconic landmarks. A legendary designer himself, Hummel, age 85, thinks deeply about how people use and appreciate buildings. Tim Woodward, the columnist, has been a champion of authentic places since his early reporting on Boise’s urban renewal in 1972. Reporter Jeanne Huff worked closely with Hummel and Woodward to identify object lessons. Todd Shallat, the historian, is a student of the physical layout of streets. Together, the team set out to devise a rating system for understanding the social impact of architecture. Part history and part social science, with contributions from more than a dozen of Boise’s best photographers and artists, the book launches a series about cities and the dynamics of growth.

Melissa R. Lavitt, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of
Social Sciences and Public Affairs
Boise State University
five fundamentals of PLACE

Architecture is memory and civic identity. It is the dialogue between generations that translates form onto space.
Charles Hummel is the sort of man my father would have addressed with deference. Dad was a miner's son who never graduated from high school. A modestly successful businessman by dint of self-education and hard work, he came to Boise in his early forties, fell in love with the place and never left. He died at 83, convinced he had found Shangri-la.

Hummel is a Boise native and for most of his life has been among its most prominent citizens. He received his master's degree in architecture from Columbia when Dwight Eisenhower was its president. Tourtellotte and Hummel, the architectural firm founded by his grandfather, designed Idaho's Statehouse, St. John's Cathedral, the Egyptian Theater, the Hoff Building and other iconic Boise edifices. Hummel architects have designed so many Idaho homes and other buildings that he has no estimate of the number. The company's public and commercial buildings in Boise include the Hall of Mirrors, the Boise Centre on the Grove (Grove Plaza), the U.S. Courthouse, the Idaho Transportation Department headquarters and many more—including the Idaho Statesman Building where I've spent most

* Statesman columnist Tim Woodward was born and raised in Boise.
of my working life. Hummel is a fellow with the American Institute of Architects, has served
on the city and county planning and zoning commissions and is often consulted on matters
of growth and development.

My father and Charles Hummel: Two very different men with some things in
common. Like Hummel the prominent architect, Bert Woodward the obscure busi-
nessman loved Boise and was bewitched by buildings. He couldn’t drive by a new
one going up without slowing to a crawl and offering his assessment of its
esthetic qualities—or their absence. He never
tired of taking me to construction sites to
watch the progress of the work, passing on
to his young son a lifelong interest in the
subject. I briefly studied architecture in
college because of him, quickly learning I
had the passion but not the aptitude. One
of my father’s favorite refrains was that
Boise’s attributes needed only to be dis-
covered for its population to swell to
the size of Spokane’s, then several
times Boise’s, but now slightly small-
er.

When I was asked to write
this book with
Hummel
on the
places
that make
Boise
unique,
my father
was the
first per-
son to
come to
mind. His
son, the
failed
architectural student, hanging out with Charles Hummel? Right. And we’ll have a black president someday, too.

*Quintessential Boise: an Architectural Journey* is Hummel’s expert view of the places that make Boise special, downloaded through the filter of a columnist who has been writing about its special places and people for more years than I like to admit. His view began with a list of 25 possible sites, shrank when it threatened to become unmanageable and grew again. The end result is Hummel’s top picks, followed by a detailed list of more buildings, streetscapes and landmarks you’ll find only in Boise. Hummel devised the criteria, explained presently, to rate them. We toured the most iconic on foot—Hummel at 83, jaunty in a Panama hat atop a head full of erudition and me struggling to keep up with him.

Our first outing was to the neighborhood where Hummel’s grandfather and namesake made his home in the River Street area. Not a streetscape on his top list of quintessential Boise places, but an appropriate place to begin. Listening to his stories, I was struck by how little the neighborhood has changed and how much it has changed. Before Lucky Peak Dam was finished in 1955, Hummel remembers the Boise River meandering right up to the corner of 14th and River Streets.

**Architect Charles Frederick Hummel with grandson, about 1928. Above: Grandson Charles Hummel’s award from the American Institute of Architects. Opposite: Frederick Hummel’s 1927 Egyptian Theater.**
His father learned to swim there. Today, it’s four lanes of traffic. Two blocks away, a new, multi-family housing development overlooks century-old homes across the street.
Fourteenth from Grand to River is one of the last remnants of the old River Street neighborhood, once an ethnic mix of eastern Europeans, blacks and Asians that is now a fading memory. Retro streetlights lend a nostalgic touch and some of the houses look much as they did in the days when William Edgar Borah, Idaho’s Lion of the Senate, strolled the nearby street that bears his name.

“This is old Boise,” Hummel said. “This area was laid out before the automobile. You have big houses next to little houses, porches and small front yards. It’s walkable. People could sit on their porches and talk to people on the sidewalk. This is what planners are after with the new urbanism.

“The older homes are well maintained; someone’s obviously loved them. And the multi-housing development on the corner is the kind of new architecture I like. Even though it is two or three stories, it doesn’t look like it. It doesn’t dwarf the older houses. It’s inviting.”

Put another way, the neighborhood scores highly on most of Hummel’s criteria for being a special Boise place that hasn’t lost its character to growth. It is accessible. It encourages human interaction. Its evolution has largely respected its history and its identity remains intact.

Marc Goodwin, who lives in a Sears-Roebuck house partially converted to a beauty salon at 509 S. 14th, likes “the fact that the houses are old and built up high in case of a flood. The neighborhood is close to downtown and most of the other places I need to go, so I can walk or ride my bike just about everywhere. There are a lot of rental houses so the neighborhood might not be as friendly as it was in the old days, but people still talk to each other. We talk to our neighbors a lot.”

Then, the clinker—another multi-family housing unit that, in Hummel’s words, “clashes with the neighborhood. It’s formula architecture with a fake mansard roof. It doesn’t fit.”
So there, on an obscure street most modern-day Boiseans are only dimly aware of, is a paradox of its development and that of virtually all cities: Success and failure, the special and the banal, side by side.

"This old neighborhood is probably threatened," Hummel said. "It could go either way. If it is developed, I hope it goes the way of the neighborhood around it. It has wings."

The neighborhood around it is a mix of attractive, newer housing, from low-income residences to high-end condominiums.

Our wings also have taken us to some maladroit landings. A short walk from the old River Street neighborhood, on our grandest boulevard: the twin eyesores of the Hampton Inn and Grove hotels.

What places and qualities make one city different from others?

If Boise has an overriding quality that separates it from most other same size and larger cities, it could be argued that it is neighborliness—a sort of abiding friendliness common in small towns but now considered quaint in most urban environs. Many Boiseans not only make eye contact but smile and speak as they pass one another on downtown streets. Virtually every neighborhood has a neighborhood association. And when tragic news befalls local individuals or families, it frequently results in donations totaling in the thousands.

Some of the places that comprise our Boise have changed through the years. Very few Boiseans are left who remember the old Natatorium, White City and other local fixtures of early 20th Century. Many special places of my youth are now fading memories. The sandy beach where high school students built bonfires and drank illicit beer above the Diversion Dam on summer nights is now a busy highway.

The Miramar
and Fiesta ballrooms, Braves Field, Manley’s Cafe and other beloved gathering places are gone as well, which is too bad. Friday and Saturday night dances in those old ballrooms were the social highlights of the week, Braves Field was as pretty a minor league ballpark as you could hope to see and Manley’s Cafe was arguably the most affectionately regaled greasy spoon in the Northwest. Its epic servings delighted celebrities from the famous New Yorker food critic Calvin Trillin to Jascha Heifetz, the world-renowned violinist.

Other places that help define Boise have remained constant. When I was a child and my parents wanted to show off for out-of-town guests, they took them on a drive past the stately homes on Harrison Boulevard and Warm Springs Avenue, brought them downtown to have their pictures taken on the steps of the Idaho State Capitol building and, for the piece de resistance, drove up Capitol Boulevard to the Boise Depot, where they treated the visitors to a postcard view of the Boise Front and the city below. They’d point out our small but growing junior college (now Boise State University), being sure to mention its winning football team (even then) and finish the production with a picnic beside the Boise River in Julia Davis Park. Iconic places then and now.

Hummel remembers the day the Capitol Boulevard Bridge opened in 1930. “People would drive across the Ninth Street Bridge admiring the lights on the new bridge.”

The boulevard’s northern terminus is the Statehouse, designed by Hummel’s grandfather and John Tourtellotte. Its southern terminus is the lovely, California Mission style Boise Depot, which Hummel considers “the most impressive Union Pacific Depot between Portland and Omaha.” Most of the city turned out for its opening in 1925. Girls decorated themselves in apple blossoms; former Gov. James Hawley was resplendent in a cowboy outfit with six-guns. Harry Truman spoke there on his whistle-stop tour. The Portland
Rose and City of Portland trains brought passengers there from around the nation until 1971 and Amtrak continued the tradition for two more decades, ending in 1997.

Renovations by the Morrison-Knudsen Corporation and the city have restored the building's grandeur, now mainly reserved for private functions. That and a demonic quirk of road design that makes it all but inaccessible for southbound travelers lacking a GPS have made the once bustling landmark a quiet place most of the time.

Its parking lot used to be a lover's lane. It was there, on a summer evening in 1949, that Hummel fidgeted in his father's Oldsmobile while working up the nerve to propose to his wife. Few if any Boiseans have a stronger connection to the Statehouse, the Boise Depot and Capitol Boulevard than he does.

Capitol Boulevard originally was planned to have formal gardens extending from the Depot all the way to the Statehouse. It became a busy thoroughfare instead, often criticized in recent years for violations of the setbacks meant to provide an unobstructed view of the Statehouse from the top of Depot Hill. Hummel deplored the violations as much as anyone but is happy with the Capitol Boulevard we know today.

"Its integrity is still intact," he said. "It used to be that when you looked down from Platt Gardens you saw a trailer court, a foundry and machine shop, gas stations and lots of billboards. Most of those things are gone now and the trees have grown up. You could argue that they impinge on the view, but they also beautify it. It's our signature view and, despite the setback violations, it's still impressive. It's one of the things that says 'Boise.'"
Others at the top of his list: Eighth Street and the Grove Plaza, the North End and Hyde Park, Bronco Stadium, the Boise Foothills, the Boise River and the Boise River Greenbelt, Julia Davis Park, Garden City, Bogus Basin and Edwards Boise Stadium 22 and IMAX complex in West Boise.

Eighth Street he sees as “the spine of our revitalized downtown.” That would be the downtown that has replaced our postwar downtown, the war being a 20-year effort to knock down cherished historic buildings and replace them with a regional shopping mall that resembled nothing so much as a giant Quonset hut. That ended when a new city administration recognized the futility of trying to woo department stores down-
town, allowed the mall to sprawl amid the open spaces and free parking of suburbia and built the Boise equivalent of a public square—the Grove Plaza—where the ill-fated mall would have been. That was the beginning of the vital downtown we know today and nowhere is it more vital than on teeming, socially vibrant Eighth Street.

People gather for coffee and conversation on its sidewalks and in its restaurants and coffee houses every morning of the week. On public market days, it can be a challenge just to wade through its crowds. Its eateries are jammed for lunch and dinner; evenings bring yet another crowd for the nightlife. At the Grove Plaza, depending on the time of day and year, you’ll find everyone from children playing in the fountain to business types at the Boise Centre to sports fans at the Qwest Arena.

"The Grove works," Hummel said. "It’s not the Plaza San Marco, but it does what it was planned to do because it is people-scaled. ... The planners thought it would have some great architecture. I won’t comment on the convention center because it is a Hummel building, but I like the Wells Fargo Building a lot. I like its slick, big-city feel. It is elegant. I like the US Bank Building, too.

Architecturally, almost everyone agrees that the hotel and arena are terrible. But as it turned out, we can live with them. They provide life at certain times when this would be a dead area. Good streetscapes breed human interaction. The Grove and almost all of Eighth Street do that."

South of The Grove, Eighth is quieter.
Five lanes of through traffic on Front Street remains an impediment to foot traffic, though weekend signal timing has made the street a bit more pedestrian-friendly. Front is part of the reason that BoDo and Eighth south of there have a different feel from the rest of the street. Hummel is hopeful that one day a pedestrian underpass will change that, but even then, BoDo doesn’t rate high on his list of special Boise places. Despite high-end shops, restaurants and a theater, it isn’t particularly inviting and it isn’t Boise. It is Anyplace, U.S.A.

It is hard to believe that P.F. Chang’s, a chain restaurant with a brick and stone facade and two gigantic horse sculptures, occupies the onetime site of the down-home Murray’s Drive-In, a Boise eatery that still evokes sighs from all who remember it.

Bernyce McCormick, a former carhop at Murray’s and the adopted daughter of its owners, remembers selling “a thousand hamburgers there at 10 cents apiece on the night of D-Day. Everyone in town loved Murray’s. It was such a special place.”

Now of Lewiston, Idaho, McCormick has never seen P.F. Chang’s.

“I don’t want to see it,” she said. “I’d rather remember it the way it was.”

Murray’s and the slickly packaged P.F. Chang’s may seem exact opposites, but they have one thing in common in addition to sharing the same soil. Murray’s was frequently jammed with customers waiting for carhops to deliver orders (including beer) to their window trays and there are nights when ‘Chang’s is packed to its gilded rafters. Both are, or were, places where people congregate—a criterion that inspired Hummel to include among his Boise icons some places that wouldn’t have made the cut on the basis of architecture alone.

Garden City, for example. Naming your favorite piece of Garden City architecture is like being asked to hum your favorite Miles Davis tune. But if you know anything about jazz, you admire Davis’s genius. And if you live in the Boise Valley, you go to Garden City.
Once named “Chinese Gardens” and from 1949 to 1953 the valley’s gambling Mecca, Garden City today draws people for a wide variety of reasons. Its nightlife has attracted crowds for generations. Restaurants and watering holes like the Ranch Club and the Stagecoach (both still around) and Edward’s and the Hi-Ho and others now gone have lured customers with everything from hearty food and live music to wet T-shirt contests.

Garden City also is, to a significant degree, the valley’s service center. If you have a typewriter, lawnmower or air compressor that needs to be fixed or are looking for car or truck parts, a timer for a sprinkler system, vacuum tubes, custom window frames, pumps, generators, an RV or mobile home, a body shop, welding shop, machine shop or carpentry shop, chances are you head to Garden City. You also can find an inexpensive place to live there, or, increasingly as Garden City reinvents itself once again, a high-end waterfront home.

The Edwards Boise Stadium 22 and IMAX complex makes Hummel’s list for the same reason. It is, in his words, “throw-away architecture.” Imported glitz thriving amid the onetime pastures of West Boise. But, anyone who has tried to see a movie there without buying tickets early has learned the hard way not to do it again. Local bands draw crowds for concerts and the complex of restaurants and other businesses that have sprung up around the theater has, in short order, helped it become a wildly popular destination, even if it does look like New Fresno.

The ultimate example of people-packing power in Boise and arguably all of Idaho is Bronco Stadium.

“If you want to talk about affecting thousands of people, no place else comes close,” Hummel said. “The tailgate culture, 30,000 fans or more for nearly every game; there is really nothing else like it.”
The addition of the Stueckle Sky Center increased the stadium's capacity to 33,500. More additions are planned and as long as the Broncos keep winning, filling the stands isn’t likely to be a problem.

Hummel likes the “brutal concrete architecture” of Bronco Stadium, designed by the late Nat Adams. But he has some misgivings about the Sky Center.
"You have this massive structure that almost overwhelms the other side of the stadium and it is sitting on skinny little legs that don’t look strong enough to support it."

Skinny legs aside, many of the same things can be said of Bogus Basin. It attracts crowds of skiers and snowboarders in winter and serves as the setting for activities from trail rides to star gazing parties in summer.

Bogus Basin is at the apex of the Boise Front, the hills and mountains that rise to some 7,000 feet north of the city and provide its mountain backdrop. Green in the spring, tawny in summer and fall, spectacular after a heavy snowfall, the mountains are an ever-changing tapestry. In the right light, they almost seem to glow—pink during a winter sunset, gold on an Indian Summer afternoon, lavender on a summer evening.

Crisscrossed by miles of hiking and biking trails, the Front is a recreation playground for young and old, a wildlife haven and, increasingly, during the last half century, a place to live. When I was a boy, we rode our bicycles there to fish and catch tadpoles in ponds long since filled and paved over. Thousands of people now live and work in the once virgin hills that comprised our Huck Finn playground.

"It’s surprising that it took so long for foothills homes to be established," Hummel said. "They crept up modestly from Sixth and Seventh streets after World War II, but it wasn’t until the Smith brothers came along in the 1950s and developed the Highlands that it really took off. It was inevitable that it would happen because of the proximity to town and the great views of the city. Today, the foothills are immensely popular with the Ridge to Rivers Trail System. And you can see them from almost everyplace in the valley. They’re a constant reminder of where we are."

Much of what applies to the foothills applies to the Boise River as well. Nothing is lovely in the same way as a city with a river running through it and few cities are fortunate..."
enough to have a river as clean and useable as Boise’s. Anglers catch trophy-sized trout in the heart of the city. People float on the river, swim in it, relax, recreate and reside along its banks. When foot traffic damaged some banks during the float parade of the mercifully deceased Boise River Festival, the parade was moved to Capitol Boulevard. The river even
gave us our name. When desert-weary French explorers spotted its willows and cottonwoods—our only large, native trees—and cried "les bois (the woods)," they had no idea what they were starting.

The Boise River Greenbelt that skirts the river began with small land acquisitions and a few short strips of pavement in the late 1960s and early 1970s and has grown to a 26-mile path stretching from Lucky Peak Reservoir through the city and beyond. Except for the dead of night, there is rarely a time including the dead of winter that it isn't heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists, many commuting to and from work. Serious crimes have occurred there, but in recent years, bicycle police officers and volunteers patrolling in golf carts—the only motorized vehicles allowed—have increased safety.

Due in large part to the Greenbelt, Boise is one of only two Northwest cities—the other is Portland—where stranded cyclists can use their American Automobile Association memberships to get a lift. Boiseans aren't entirely joking when they say it is only a question of time before the Greenbelt will need traffic signals.

"Most of the great cities in the world have a river of some interest," Hummel said. "The Arno in Florence, the Seine, the Thames ... Boise's has become a hallmark of summer. Its water quality is excellent. And I don't know of many cities in the U.S. that have anything like our greenbelt. With a
whole mile of university frontage and the string of parks named after women, with more being added, it is just a beautiful amenity. It's part of what makes Boise Boise."

The first of the major parks, and for decades the largest, is Julia Davis Park. It was a gift to the city from pioneer produce supplier Tom Davis, was named for his wife and makes Hummel's top list for "diversity that the other parks don't have. They all have big swathes of grass and places for softball and picnics and other things, but Julia Davis has open spaces plus a zoo, the historical museum and art museum, the band shell, rose-garden, ponds, paddleboats and the footbridge to the university. It links the town to the gown."

One of the town's most enduring and prestigious residential neighborhoods, the North End, was Boise's first large, residential addition, expanding it north and west of "old Boise." Even when my parents built their North End home at 25th and Lemp Streets in 1951, it was still vigorously being developed. It had a generous supply of vacant lots that inspired the rightly departed diversion of dirt-clod fights. Looking back, it seems almost miraculous that none of the North End kids of those days lost an eye in those spirited battles.

Today's kids have no such worries. Not only would the quaint practice of hurling dirt clods at one another instead of sending text messages never occur to them, but there also are virtually no vacant lots left. The North End has become one of the most sought-after chunks of residential real estate in Idaho.

"It's immensely popular, as shown by real estate values"
that have continued to increase even in hard times," Hummel said. "It epitomizes the residential aspect of the city at its best, with a huge variety of houses with varying levels of affordability and especially style. It is almost a demonstration area for the popular styles of various eras—Victorian, bungalows, the classic American foursquare with two stories and a porch and others. When you progress from State Street up the numbered streets, you start way back in time and the further north you go, the more the newer styles emerge. It's like an architectural layer of styles. And the trees are well established and kept up, which is another wonderful aspect of the city. We even have a city forester."

The North End's oldest and most storied people place is Hyde Park, built in the late 1800s as Boise's first "suburban" shopping center. It had convenient, streetcar access, stores, offices; a fountain. When Hummel's father's family moved to Boise in 1895, they rode the trolley to Hyde Park for ice-cream sodas.

"My father said it was the high point of his introduction to Boise."
Like the rest of the North End, Hyde Park has changed and adapted. New people and businesses have come and gone; homes and other buildings have been restored, expanded, converted to other uses. In-fill has given some blocks a contemporary look. In recent years, a number of older homes have been razed and replaced by expensive residences that may or may not complement their neighborhoods. Gentrification was inevitable.

The overall character, however, remains essentially unchanged. For every modest older home that has been leveled and replaced with a monument to opulence, dozens have been lovingly restored or remodeled. If my father could visit his North End neighborhood today, he'd find it largely unchanged. Many of its homes, including his, look almost exactly the way they looked 30 years ago. Others look better. Some of the neighborhood eyesores have been tastefully rebuilt and updated without changing the feel of the place. He'd still feel right at home there.

Other parts of Boise have changed so much he wouldn't know them. I often wonder, as I go about the Boise of today, what my father would think of it. He died just before the boom that brought us Boise Towne Square, the Grove and a revitalized downtown, most of our taller buildings, scores of commercial and housing developments and more than 100,000 new neighbors. My guess is that he'd have approved of most of it. Most, but not all. He was a Boise booster to the core, but it's doubtful that even he could have loved the Grove Hotel.

Happily, Hummel is still here to tell us exactly what he thinks—which brings us neatly back to his five-star system for rating "Quintessential Boise" places. Five stars are best, one worst, based on the following criteria:

**Identity:** Are the places uniquely Boise? Do they reflect and complement our history? Example of a five-star rating: Capitol Boulevard.

**Scale:** Are they well proportioned? Do they blend with their surroundings and promote neighborly interaction? Example: The North End.
Utility: Are they accessible and well used? Do they serve the public? Are they walkable and bikeable? Are they easy to access by bus or car? Example: Eighth Street.

Consistency: Are they individually and collectively complementary? Example: The Boise River, the Boise River Greenbelt and string of parks.


Boise, of course, is more than what fits in the top of Hummel's list. The pages that follow detail more places that rate high in some, but perhaps not all, of his criteria.

Think of this little book as a guide to what makes Boise like no place else. In an age when you can drive across the country and eat in the same restaurant, sleep in the same motel and see virtually the same skylines, suburbs and strip malls every day, what makes us different is priceless.
Five Fundamentals

Boise’s most authentic places are memorable and functional. They provide accessible forums for neighborly interaction. Historic or modern, they epitomize the Boise in Boise, respecting the aesthetic of neighborhoods and the way the great streets have been developed and used.

1. **Identity**: Quintessential architecture should respect the history and traditions of Boise.

2. **Scale**: Buildings should be well proportioned; large buildings should have appropriate setbacks so they do not overwhelm.

3. **Utility**: A place should be usable, functional and easy to reach on foot or by bike, bus, or car.

Capitol Corinthian column (Otto Kitsinger), Johnson Block (Tim Buckley), O’Farrell log cabin (Buckley), Boise Art Museum (Steve Bly) Key Bank parking structure (Buckley), Adelmann turret (Buckley).
4. **Consistency**: Buildings and parks should match their neighborhood streetscape; the parts of a building complex should complement the whole.

5. **Impact**: A place should be memorable, inspiring and carry emotional weight.
quintessential
DOWNTOWN
Glass and steel rise above Romanesque brick and brownstone. Walkable streets preserve architectural links to the past.
Downtown grew from planks and cottonwood shanties along the ten original blocks of Main Street, platted in 1863. Pictured: Hopffgarten Sign Company at 1007 W. Idaho, about 1899. Previous: Freak Alley off Eighth Street between Idaho and Bannock.
Boise's compact commercial center is a case study of the interplay between architecture and civic identity, between the physical form of buildings and the way a city has come to perceive its own sense of place. Boise planners define "downtown" as 641 acres. From the greenbelt to State Street, the city's center spreads sixteen blocks from Broadway to Americana. Downtown includes the Old Boise and South Eighth Street historic districts; also the Grove Plaza, Capitol Mall, North Eighth Street, the "Near East" St. Luke's Hospital complex, the Boise Cascade headquarters at One Jefferson Plaza and the mixed-use River-Myrtle urban renewal corridor. Planners estimate a downtown population of 4,285 residents in 2,366 housing units. Shopping and employment draw, on an average weekday, more than 40,000 commuters. St. Luke's is the largest employer. Downtown also supports 105 retailers, 65 restaurants, 15 night-time bars, 14 public statues, 5 city parks and 4 museums.
Historians have debated the origins of downtown as a commercial hub. Some maintain that it prospered despite isolation. Others say downtown’s strategic location fated commercial success. Founded in 1863, Boise commanded the gold road to Idaho City, branching north from the Oregon Trail. An 1867 census found 1,134 permanent residents. In 1890, the year of Idaho statehood, more than 2,000 people lived and worked downtown. City directories listed three gunsmiths, four jewelers, four drugstores, eight blacksmiths and fourteen saloons. Rail service via Nampa brought the Oregon Short Line to Boise’s Tenth Street Station. Stone from Table Rock’s quarry inspired a heavy-arched castle-like style of commercial architecture called Romanesque Revival. Downtown examples included the Boise City National Bank (1890), Falk-Bloch Mercantile (1891), Boise City Hall (1893), Old Boise’s Telephone Building (1899) and the Union Block (1901). Chinese from Canton crowded the downtown alley behind old City Hall. Mexican packers ran freight from a circle of cabins near Pioneer Cemetery. African Americans mixed with Eastern Europeans and Basques near Lovers Lane and Lee Streets (now along River). Entertainment venues included the Columbia and Pinney theaters. Off the 600 block of Main was Davis Levy’s backstreet of brothels and bawdy houses with names like The Bucket of Blood. Big city news reporters first took notice of Boise in the summer of 1907 during a sensational murder conspiracy trial. Labor boss William “Big Bill” Haywood stood accused of conspiracy in the brutal dynamite murder of former Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg. Trial reporters described a handsome city with screeching electric streetcars. Automobiles raced past horses at ten miles per hour. At Tenth and Main the six-story Idanha Hotel had the city’s first Otis elevator. Attorney Clarence Darrow rented an opulent room under the Idanha’s turret. Boise, said Darrow, was an “Athens of the sage-
brush." Its public buildings were neat and modern; its houses resplendent with trees and flowering shrubs.

The Idanha was the last of Main Street’s fantasy turrets. By 1912 the geometry of the skyline had changed with flat-roofed cage-framed buildings in the commercial style pioneered by Chicago architect Daniel Burnham. The Empire Building on Tenth and the Idaho Building on Eighth both echoed the Chicago style. Downtown, meanwhile, boomed with lumberyards, brick making, retail stores and banking. In 1913 the Boise Commercial Club called the city an “Eldorado” with 100 miles of cement sidewalks and 15 miles of hard surface pavement.

Downtown sidewalks had underground storage vaults with delivery elevators. Telephone and power lines joined water mains under the pavement. Coal chutes fed heating plants.

The 1927 opening of the Egyptian Theater was a turning point for downtown
and its architecture. Romanesque and Classical Revival gave way to sober expressions of the coming Art Deco style. Deco in Boise’s downtown meant clean and austere with stylized geometric motifs and zigzagged ornamentation: the Hotel Boise (1930), the Idaho Power Building (1932), Boise Gallery of Art (1936), the John Regan Hall (1929) and Ada County Courthouse (1939). Main Street at midcentury was lined with movie houses. Falks, the Golden Rule, the Cash Bazaar, the Mode and Alexander’s dominated the shopping district. Eighth at Grove was a cluster of garages and service stations. Underground tanks leached gas. Architect Hummel, who worked with Capital City Development Corporation on The Grove’s new fountain and plaza, vividly remembers the fumes.

Urban renewal profoundly transformed the look of the downtown core. Known for its corporate headquarters—for Morrison-Knudsen, Albertsons, J.R. Simplot and Boise Cascade—Boise also was famed for razing historical landmarks. “Boise,” said L.J. Davis, a critic writing for Harpers, “stands an excellent chance of becoming the first American city to have deliberately eradicated itself.” Boise’s redevelopment agency

Not until the shopping mall proposal went west did downtown strongly rebound. In 1986, after a board of architects demanded a new direction, Boise City Council signaled a change: The future of the
city center would be benches and public art on tree-shaded walkable sidewalks; a brick plaza on Eighth Street would provide a community gathering place. Boom years followed. The "Renaissance," as Boiseans called it, featured the restoration of 44 historic buildings. New construction brought the Wells Fargo Building (1988), the Grove Hotel (1989), the Centre on the Grove convention center (1990), the Washington Mutual Building (1995) and five tax-financed downtown parking garages. Twenty-first century additions included Front Street's Ada County Courthouse and the implausibly skinny Aspen above the BoDo retail complex. In 2006 the Banner Bank on Bannock won national recognition for energy-efficient design.

Downtown is rich and too tightly packed for an essay on every landmark. Our sampling features authentic places that give downtown feeling and form.

Idaho State Capitol
700 W. Jefferson St.

Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

The Idaho State Capitol (also known as the Idaho Statehouse) is downtown’s most iconic building. Designed in 1905 by Tourtellotte and Company, it was patterned after the Neoclassical U.S. Capitol Building. The style also has been called Federal, Renaissance Revival and Beaux Arts. It rose on massive blocks of sandstone that were quarried at Table Rock and slid down the southern face of the butte. Corinthian columns used a hard-white stucco called scagliola that was polished to resemble marble. Real marble
from Georgia, Alaska, Vermont and Italy faced the interior. Five layers of sandstone were rounded to resemble the logs of a pioneer’s cabin. The dome—topped with an eagle and completed in 1912—rose to a height of 208 feet. The wings were completed in 1920. Skylights and reflective marble bathed the rotunda in sun.

In 1905 the Classical Revival style was an obvious choice for a capitol building. Architects Tourtellotte and Hummel had previously experimented with classical patterns at the Timothy Regan House and the Carnegie Library. At the Capitol, senior partner Tourtellotte argued for the added expense of a sky-lit sandstone crown—a
cupola—that would minimize the need for electric interior lights. The Capitol, he insisted, “[was] not a cave with ornamental colonnades on the interior standing in superstitious darkness and gloom.” Sunlight and classical symmetry would inspire enlightened and balanced ideas. “The great white light of conscience must be allowed to shine,” said Tourtellotte. “Interior illumination [would] make clear the path of duty.”

Tourtellotte’s junior partner attended to the precision of the engineering details. Born in Baden, Germany and technically schooled in Stuttgart, Charles F. Hummel had worked as a draftsman before immigrating to Chicago in 1885. Five years later he joined J.E. Tourtellotte Company. Hummel made sure
the Capitol rested on a solid foundation of granite bedrock, that weight-bearing columns were precisely calculated and that the steel beams adequately supported the dome.

Restoration began in 2001 with construction bonds and a $35 million state appropriation. In 2005 the legislature financed construction by extending Idaho’s cigarette tax. Completed in 2010, the 30-month $120 million restoration added two 25,000 square-foot underground wings. Restored scagliola and replica light fixtures disguise modern computer cables. Historical treasures include Charles Ostner’s 1869 equestrian statue of George Washington and a marble French replica of the Greek “Winged Victory of Samothrace.” The restored Statehouse remains the nation’s only capitol building with geothermal heat.
The Egyptian Theater
700 W. Main St.

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Designed in 1926 by Frederick "Fritz" Hummel, the theater crested an Egyptomania craze that inspired more than 100 ornate movie houses. The craze began in Hollywood with Grauman's Egyptian Theater, opened in 1922. Fueled later that year by international fascination with the discovery of King "Tut" Tutankhamun's 3,000-year old tomb, the Egyptian Revival brought gold-leaf columns, plaster sphinxes and faux hieroglyphics. In Boise the Egyptian Revival anticipated the stylized motif of Depression-era Art Deco.

Merchant Leo J. Falk and two partners financed construction. Joining a gaudy string of downtown movie houses—the Majestic, Pinney, Rialto, Grand and Strand—the Egyptian featured black floral presentation drawing for the Egyptian, 1926. Inspired by the 1922 discovery of King Tut's tomb, the theater is one of the best surviving examples of the Egyptomania craze. Picture: Golden paint and exterior details returned with the theater's renovation in 1978.

and the Ada after WWII. In its heyday the theater premiered Robert Redford's "Jeremiah Johnson" and a Mae West movie about a gold-hearted madam from Boise.

The Egyptian was known as the Fox in the 1930s.
named Diamond-tooth Lil. Jimmy Stewart practiced on the pipe organ while the actor-turned-bomber pilot was stationed at Gowen Field. In 1977, philanthropist Earl Hardy saved the building from urban renewal. Appropriately the son of the building’s architect directed its restoration. Charles Hummel recalls the laborious task of removing the theater’s thickly coated white enamel paint. Artists approximated the original ceiling colors in a rebuilt theater lobby. One imaginative painter embellished the faux hieroglyphics with an image of his cat.

South 14th Street
14th from Grand Avenue to River

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

This row of houses preserves a working-class industrial district. After 1893, when the Oregon Short Line built storage tanks and rail yards along Front Street, the street catered to Eastern Europeans. About 65 African Americans lived nearby in the 1930s. Figuratively and literally, 14th Street was south of the tracks.

Caricature of Charles F. Hummel from Builders of Boise, about 1915. Opposite: The brooding flat-arched architecture of Chicago’s Henry Hobson Richardson inspired the Union Block, designed by Tourtellotte and Hummel in 1901.
Old Boise Historic District
Idaho, Main and Grove Streets from Capitol Boulevard to Fifth

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility
★ Consistency ★ Impact

In 1980 the City of Boise established the ten-block Old Boise Historic District, bounded by Capitol and Fifth, Idaho and Grove. Although the 1976 construction of the new City Hall had razed the heart of the district, Old Boise preserves more than 20 turn-of-the-century structures. Heavy arches of Table Rock sandstone give a brooding medieval look to the Telephone Building at 690 Main Street. Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone sold service for six-cents-a-day a year after the building opened in 1899. The Telephone Building butted against the third home of the Idaho Statesman, a pro-abolition, anti-Confederate tri-weekly newspaper at its founding in 1864.

Irish-made red brick still dominates the Old Boise district. Landmarks include the 1910 Pioneer Tent Building where immigrant fingers stitched canvas into awnings and wagon covers. Another red brick Main Street

Bernie Jestrabek-Hart used two miles of reclaimed barbed wire for her 700-pound Idaho First Plaza tribute to a Boise Basin miner, erected in 1984. Opposite: Old Boise jewelers, about 1890s.
Ouintessential BOISE

Old Boise is quintessential because its architecture helps to preserve the city's thriving nightlife. Where miners once crowded saloons, hookah bars compete with mechanical bulls and beer pong. Black leather straps attached to the walls steady the table dancers. Push-carts sell sauerkraut hot dogs. Young bar patrons in denim flash IDs and line up for drafts.

landmark is the Turnverein Building, completed in 1906. Once a German athletic club for gymnastics and polka dancing, the Turnverein shared Sixth and Main with an Irish saloon, a Bohemian madam, a brewery and the Statesman. A block north on Idaho Street was the tall brick Central Fire Station. In 1913 the station's tower overlooked a Basque handball court. Pickpockets worked the red-lit alley. Jacob's Canal supplied a laundry district where immigrants from Canton pressed collars and cuffs for whites.

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Officially, the Basque Block is part of the Old Boise Historic District, but it retains an identity all its own. It has become the cultural center for the largest concentration of Basques outside France and Spain. Boise's Basques mostly hail from small farms and fishing villages within 30 miles of Gernika in the Spanish Basque province of Bizkaia. Early immigrants, mostly male, spent winters in boarding houses. The Jacobs-Uberuaga House boarded Basque shepherders from 1910 to 1969. Its Grove Street lawn is shaded by a cutting from the "freedom oak" of Gernika. Cherished as a symbol of freedom, the original tree survived a 1937 Nazi bombing raid during the Spanish Civil War.

Today the block is a model for smart-growth urban renewal. The boarding house abuts the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. Next door is the brick Anduiza Building where Basques still play a punishing kind of handball called pelota in a court they call a fronton. Other landmarks include the Basque Market and authentic Bar Gernika. Engraved spirals in the sidewalks display Basque surnames. A metal sculpture and flags wave the colors of Basque independence. Paella, chorizos, roasted meats and stews recall the taste of the Basque county at restaurant Leku Ona, formerly a telephone company warehouse, lovingly rebuilt to resemble a shepherder's boarding house.

The Basque Block is four-star quintessential. It has historical identity and pedestrian scale. It is functional and memorable. The block falls short on consistency, however, because of surface parking for a glassy furniture store.

Greater Eighth Street

Boise River to Bannock, including BoDo, the Grove Plaza and the walkable café-style restaurant district

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Eighth Street with its 1863 ferry crossing approximates the route of the wagon road to gold mines near Idaho City. In 1864, at the northwest corner of Eighth and Main, the Overland House became a stage stop and livery stable. Hosea Eastman of Silver City rebuilt the house with piped water and an innovative sprinkler system. Razed in 1903, the corner became a brick-and-stone commercial building called the Eastman Block. Fire destroyed the Eastman in 1987. Builders and financiers have since gone bust in failed attempts to build on the empty lot. One ill-fated scheme was a 34-story mixed-use condo project called the Boise Tower. Some say the corner with its rusted rebar is cursed by the sins of urban renewal. Boiseans now derisively call it “the hole.”

The fate of the Eastman Block is a reminder that authentic streets are more than buildings and utility lines. Great streets are highly symbolic. To thrive, they need to project a positive image and cope with historical change.

Eighth from the river to Bannock has been continually reinvented, yet the street remains authentic. Historically, the street
Downtown rises above the forested canopy of Julia Davis Park. By 1950, "City of Trees" had replaced "Boise the Beautiful" as the city's most common nickname. In 2007 the National Arbor Day Foundation honored Boise with a "Tree City USA" conservation award.
Quintessential BOISE has showcased some of the city's best architecture. Falk's Mercantile on Main became the state's premier retailer. Romanesque Boise City National Bank once shared one of Idaho's busiest corners with the Mode, the Fidelity Building and old City Hall.

In the late 1980s, after the death of ambitious plans to redevelop downtown with a mall, Eighth and Grove became ground zero for a new kind of urban renewal. Today the corner is a circle of brick with art and a central fountain. Called Grove Plaza, it fronts the convention center. Like greater plazas in many more famous places—like Union Square in San Francisco or Piazza San Marco in Venice—Grove Plaza draws pedestrian traffic by making intelligent use of open space. On weekends it thrives with stalls for local artists. Children splash through the open fountain. Concerts draw thousands for a summertime evening event called Alive After Five.

Yet the Grove Plaza has jarring features. On the southeast corner is the jutting balcony of the Bank of America Center. On the northeast is a barren parking lot. The Grove—like Greater Eighth Street and like much of downtown Boise—prospers from neighborly interaction but fails the consistency test.

**Boise Cascade Building**

1111 W. Jefferson St.

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Boise Cascade's corporate headquarters at One Jefferson Place is a structurally expressive example of a building that reveals its framing, showing Boise its bone. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) designed the building in 1971. As one of the world's great sky-
scraper innovators, SOM worked on Jefferson Street while its Chicago office was shattering construction records with the 108-story Sears Tower.

Today the corporate headquarters is called the Boise Plaza. Steel pillars open views by lifting the massive cage above its pedestrian plaza. The building also features a six-story sky-lit interior atrium with Silver Linden trees. Functional and memorable, the building is appropriately scaled, but it floats on a sea of asphalt, a setting inconsistent with Boise's compact downtown. Surface parking consumes more than two full city blocks.

The Linen District
1400 block of Grove Street

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

The Linen District takes its name from the white-brick American Linen Building. Built as a school in 1910, the building later housed a linen service in a neighborhood of automotive repair shops and service stations. Today there are plans to add about 30 condos. With restaurants, a coffee house and a restored hotel, the district may have the makings of a future Hyde Park. In 2010, however, the project is a good idea waiting for tenants and patrons. The district is functional and it is civic-minded but falls short on visual impact.

Saturday's Capital City Market at the Grove Plaza. Completed in 1988, the brick plaza with its pulsating fountain was a tax-financed urban renewal project.
Spires, turrets, fast-food, a Renaissance library, and a glassy courthouse make the North a rich mosaic of 20th century styles.
The North spreads west to Highway 55 below the beige of the Boise foothills. Pictured: Halloween at the Harry C. Wyman House on Harrison Boulevard. Previous: St. John’s Cathedral.
North Boise spreads like a V from the Fort Street cottonwood cabin where John and Mary O'Farrell built the city’s first permanent home. Bounded by State Street and the Boise foothills, the triangle opens toward Eagle. Its ten neighborhoods subdivide into 546 subdivisions with 14 public schools, 9 city parks and 5 city fire stations. Twenty-two blocks along Franklin and Hays form a Near North historic district. Nearby is historic Hyde Park where gentrification has created a tourist district. Harrison Boulevard, a third historic district, funnels skiers to Bogus Basin. Known for arching trees and zealous trick-or-treaters, the boulevard is an elegant mix of eclectic housing styles.

The North’s first subdivisions bordered the cavalry fort. In 1891, when President Benjamin Harrison visited to celebrate Idaho’s statehood, Boiseans landscaped 18th Street, creating Harrison Boulevard. Electric streetcars reached Hyde Park in 1892. West State Street became a Boise-to-Caldwell railroad. Boardwalks and service alleys paralleled streetcar lines.
Gridded but uneven, the North End emerged as a mix of gingerbread Victorians and kit-made catalog homes. In 1905, on Harrison at Eastman, Tourtellotte designed his firm’s last corner turret. The California Mission Revival reached Boise in the red-roofed George Washington Bond House, completed in 1911. English cottages and the Tudor Revival gained popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. Homebuyers with modest resources came to prefer a space-efficient, functional, low-roofed style of working-class housing called the California Craftsman Bungalow.

Today, the North sprawls to the west through postwar subdivisions. Pressured by traffic and relentless demand for evermore surface parking, North Boise remains, nevertheless, a treasure of iconic streetscapes. Our sampling features fast food, churches, a courthouse, a park, a historic shopping district and streets with service alleys built along trolley lines.

**Military Reserve on Fort Street**
Fort Street from Reserve to Sixth

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

On November 18, 1867, four years after the United States Army founded a cavalry fort on the road to Idaho City, Mayor Henry E. Prickett filed the official plat that incorporated Boise City. The cavalry parade grounds in the military reserve on Fort Street became the township’s northern edge. Locally known as Camp Boise or The Boise Barracks, the fort specialized in the training of horses for cavalry troops. In 1919 the U.S. Public Health Service took over the site for a tuberculosis hospital. A Veterans Administration hospital opened in 1938. Portions of the reserve passed to the Boise City Parks in 1950 and the
Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Hospital in 1957. Clint Eastwood rented the grounds for the filming of *Bronco Billy* in 1979.

Tennis, softball, a skateboard park and a community theater have altered historic Fort Street, but frontier buildings remain. The fort’s Officers Row preserves an 1860s sandstone warehouse. The steeple-notched John and Mary O’Farrell Cabin also dates from the era of Lincoln. At 550 W. Fort is the street’s tallest structure. Designed by the Hummel architectural firm and completed in 1968, the James A. McClure Federal Building and United States Courthouse stands like a block on a pedestal, with five massive stories on a two-story vertical lift. An apron of manicured grass sets the building back from Fort Street. Its west side is buffered by a small city park. Architecturally, the style has been called structural expressionism. The huge mass of the structure has impact but does not overwhelm.

The courthouse and Fort Street rate high for scale, utility, consistency and impact. They fail the identity rating, however, because the newer buildings have lost the aesthetic connections to Boise’s historic North End. Open land in the military reserve has lured an architectural mismatch. Likewise it was the lure of federal land that drew the courthouse away from the city’s professional center. Today the building’s Fort Street location is generally regarded as a mistake.
Hyde Park
North 13th Street, bounded by Alturas and Ridenbaugh

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact ★

Hyde Park was perhaps Boise’s first streetcar shopping district. In 1892, at 1401 N. 13th St., electric trolley service connected downtown to Speiler’s dry goods and grocery store. A barber shop and butcher shop followed; also a shoe shop, bike shop, post office, hotel, dyer, dairy and cement brick factory. In 1903, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows built a red brick meeting hall with a movable dance floor. A brick circle in the intersection marks the roundabout turnout where Boiseans stepped off the streetcar so conductors could swivel the cars.

A diversified mix of commercial and residential is a goal of smart-growth planning and a challenge for historic Hyde Park. Historic houses are gingerbread trimmed with Victorian brackets and corbels. Commercial landmarks include the concrete-block two-story Waymire Building, completed in 1902. Shops use canvas awnings to shelter pedestrian traffic. Replica aluminum faux cast-iron lamps recall the era of streetcars. Sidewalks are elbowed into the intersections to narrow the river of cars.

Restoration and gentrification have remade tiny Hyde Park. A hub for mountain bikers, the district jumps with stops for sushi and gourmet burritos, shopping boutiques and a small hotel. Gone are
Canopied shops and walkable streets make the Hyde Park Historic District a model of mixed-use New Urbanism. In 1980, Boise City Council stepped in to protect the district with Idaho’s first commercial-residential historic preservation law.

Pictured: Repairing bikes in the 1902 Clarence H. Waymire Building.
the coin laundries and daycares. Tourists stroll for antiques where the neighbors no longer frequent the mom-and-pop grocery stores.

Collister Neighborhood
West State Street to Hill and Cartwright Roads, from 36th to Pierce Park Lane

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

In 1907, about three miles west of the Statehouse, George Collister and Walter E. Pierce established a depot for the Boise & Interurban Lines. Collister, a physician, had planted 240 acres with 12,000 peach trees. Pierce, a land developer, saw profit in a light-weight electric railroad. Completed in 1912, it linked Boise to Caldwell and back through Nampa and Meridian, a valley-wide loop of 68 miles. Collister depot became a shipping point for peaches and plums. In 1914, four-room Collister School had 80 students. Nearby at Pierce Park, the railroad connected Boise to a genteel boating park.

After 1927, when buses overtook streetcars, the orchards subdivided. Covenants of the 1940s allowed for one-acre farmsteads with a horse and a cow and fifty chickens per farm. Suburbanization followed. Taft Elementary relieved overcrowding at Collister School in 1960. The M&W Market anchored the Collister shopping center in 1962. Today on Collister Drive, the Collister depot houses Terry’s State Street Saloon.

Collister neighborhood ranks high for quintessential streetscapes. Its character remains “semi-rural” according to Boise City’s comprehensive plan. The neighborhood is vibrant and family-friendly. Distinctly Boise, well proportioned, easy-to-access and consistent with the bucolic feel of postwar subdivisions, the four-star district falls short on architectural impact.
Gone is Collister's 20 room mansion and the gazebos at Pierce Park. Today, Collister's features are no longer visually memorable; they carry no emotional weight. And yet, the neighborhood works hard at revitalization. At Hill Road and 36th Street, the city backs a plan for a traffic-calming roundabout intersection. Nearby, the 36th Street Garden Center has become a mixed-use commercial node with a coffee house and condos. And, a storefront branch library breathes new life into the Collister Shopping Center.

**Harrison Boulevard**

Hays at Resseguie to Hill and Bogus Basin Roads

*Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact*

Harrison Boulevard is the North's architectural showplace. Charming and functional, with wide sidewalks and service alleys that hide the garages behind the houses, the boulevard is Idaho's first municipal residential historic

Car 99 on the Boise-to-Caldwell interurban line. Opposite: Terry's on Collister at State Street, formerly a streetcar depot.
preservation district. Volunteers on a city commission review plans for renovation and new construction. There are no chain-link fences or vinyl or plastic siding or streetside asphalt driveways. There are no restrictions on the color of paint, but the commission works to preserve appropriate architecture and landscaping. Setback regulations ensure that large houses do not overwhelm.

Platted in 1891 and improved with median landscaping in 1916, the boulevard began as a streetcar suburb bisected by trolley lines. Its original promoter was Walter E. Pierce of Kansas City, Missouri. A railroad promoter and future mayor of Boise, Pierce landscaped the emerging North End with thousands of transplanted elm trees. His real estate promotions sold Boise as "a city of trees." Pierce and his partners, together with landowners John and Catherine Lemp, donated North End parcels for Washington and Longfellow schools. Homeowners lobbied for street sprinklers and parks through a boulevard neighborhood association. By 1917, with sidewalks, storm gutters and electric lights along its shaded parkway, the street had become a proudfull model for Boise's genteel "city beautiful" movement. The Statesman called Harrison "an elite thoroughfare" and "one of the finest in the West."

Today, the historic grid keeps traffic moving efficiently without clogging any one intersection. Magnificent trees still shade immaculate sidewalks. Parents bring thousands of ghosts and goblins to kick through the leaves on Halloween night.

Architecturally, the boulevard is five-star quintessential for its mix of traditional styles. The two oldest houses are the Queen Anne villas designed by Tourtelotte and Hummel in 1901 and 1905. Colonials, Georgians, Bungalows and Mission Revivals followed the Queen Anne Era. Storybook Hansel-and-Gretel homes mixed Tudor and Picturesque styles. The boulevard also includes a log
cabin, a French chateau, a Greek Revival, a glass-bricked Art Modern, a Cold War bomb shelter, two former governor’s mansions and a seismically sound Hispanic fortress guarded by concrete lions.

**Westside Drive-In**
1929 W. State St.

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Drive-in service transformed the American diner as Boise grew north and west after WWII. Built in 1957, the West Side is nifty-Fifties automotive deco: all neon and guilty pleasure, flamingo pink and white with angular carports. Double-sided windows still serve butterscotch shakes with sprinkles. Four dollars buys Chef Lou’s World Famous Idaho Potato Ice Cream. Identifiable, memorable, well-proportioned, easy-to-use and consistent with four lanes of traffic on State Street, the Westside Drive-In evokes nostalgia. It takes us back to an era when car hops roller skated and families learned to eat in their cars.

Near North Churches
State to Fort, from 8th to 13th Streets

*Identity* ★ *Scale* ★ *Utility* ★ *Consistency* ★ *Impact*

Within six blocks of the Idaho Statehouse, between 8th and 13th in the northern-most tier of Boise’s original town site, there are eight stellar churches: St. Michael’s, Immanuel Lutheran, St. John’s, Capitol City Christian, First Presbyterian, Cathedral of the Rockies, First Baptist and Christian Science. Most are the second or third church buildings for congregations that moved north to escape the downtown boom during the decade of statehood. Divided by theology, the churches join forces with social service for the homeless and poor. Some congregations struggle to maintain historic architecture. Boiseans raise money and public awareness through candlelight walking tours.

Church construction north of State Street predated the Idaho Statehouse. In 1902, at 518 N. 8th St.,

Boise Episcopalians dedicated the English Gothic St. Michael’s Cathedral. Two years later, at 775 N. 8th St., Catholics commissioned Tourtelotte and Hummel for St. John the Evangelist, a grand Romanesque. Architect Hummel, a native of Germany, patterned the Boise cathedral after a German cathedral at Mainz.

The 1904 plan for St. John’s Cathedral showed spires that were never completed.
Opposite: Swedish Lutherans commissioned the Gothic Revival Augustana Chapel, opened in 1915.

Boise Episcopalians dedicated the English Gothic St. Michael’s Cathedral. Two years later, at 775 N. 8th St., Catholics commissioned Tourtelotte and Hummel for St. John the Evangelist, a grand Romanesque. Architect Hummel, a native of Germany, patterned the Boise cathedral after a German cathedral at Mainz.
The 1904 plan shows stone spires that were never constructed. Opened in 1920 and renovated in the 1960s, St. John's remains Idaho's largest cathedral. Its barrel-vaulted interior features marble, stained glass, painted acoustical canvas and cast-plaster ornamentation.

St. John's rose in an active decade of Near North church construction. The Capitol City Christian Church, completed in 1910, was a heavy-arched Romanesque Revival with sliding doors and an unusual circular floor plan. Nearby at 7th and Fort the architects used shingles and sandstone for the Gothic Revival Swedish Lutheran Church. Boise Methodists later adapted the Gothic Revival to the flagstone Cathedral of the Rockies at 11th and Franklin. Willet Studios of Philadelphia designed the cathedral's remarkable glass.

**Carnegie Library**

815 W. Washington St.

| ★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact |

Boise's library began with a promise from steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie. The Carnegie Foundation would pay for construction if the city would purchase the lot, form a library board and maintain the institution. With $20,000 from Carnegie, Boiseans broke ground in 1904. The library would become a “beautiful home of science and refinement,” boasted the Statesman in 1905.

Designed by Tourtellotte and Hummel, the building was bold for its time. Architects call the style Renaissance Revival. Small Tuscan columns flank the Palladian window arch. Vertically, the exterior walls resemble a three-tiered classical column with a capital, shaft and base.
Camel’s Back Park
Above Heron and 13th in Boise’s North End

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

The park gets its name from the dramatically hilled landscape that looks like a camel’s hump. A strenuous 1000-foot climb brings hikers to breathtaking views. Below to the north is the city’s thoroughly green Foothills Learning Center. On snow days the north face becomes a Mecca for gleeful tubers. In the third week of September, the park draws thousands of tourists for the North End’s neighborhood fair.

The gulches below the hump once housed livestock slaughterhouses. In 1881, on the backside above Eighth Street, two brothers from Silver City struck artesian water. Through a brick reservoir and wooden pipes, the wells fed hotels and hydrants on Main Street. Floods flashed through the gullies where children chased frogs, dug in the sand pits and splashed in the overflow ponds. In 1932, Boise City purchased 63 acres for a manicured park and nature preserve. Fires and mountain biking have since eroded the fragile hillside. In the 1990s the threat of hilltop housing projects seeded a conservation campaign. Conservationists prevailed in 2001 when Boise voters pledged $10 million to protect open space in the foothills. Tax dollars and private donations have helped the city acquire more than 8,000 hillside acres for habitat and hiking trails.
Downtown Family YMCA
1050 W. State St.

Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

The YMCA is quintessential because the building reflects its neighborhood’s sense of itself as caring, egalitarian, hard-working and healthy. Founded in 1901, the downtown YMCA now sits on its third location. Soaring membership kept pace with the fitness craze of the 1990s and the North End’s housing boom. Beautifully remodeled in 2000, the Y complex is a puzzle efficiently packed with pools, exercise rooms, racquetball and basketball courts, waterslides, a climbing wall, a drop-in daycare, a teen activity center and a roof-top playground. Banners and steamy windows promote clean uplifting fun. Glassy and light, with floor-to-ceiling windows that warm the aquatic center, the Y actively hums with neighborly interaction. Its parts work independently, yet they complement the whole.

Growth of the downtown Y has remade its historic streetscape. In 2000, as membership surged in the wake of a $8.6 million renovation, the Y added 22 spaces of parking and a peak-hour parking attendant. Preservationists responded by proposing a 22-block Near North Conservation District. Of the district’s 443 city lots, 61 were already devoted to surface parking. Only 64 of the lots still had single-family homes.

The brightly renovated YMCA in its third downtown location fronts newly restored Boise High School. Opposite: A turn-of-the century cottage on 13th Street in the Hyde Park Historic District.
Neon bars serve a stadium district. A parkway follows the greenbelt to a sandstone riverside school.
Triangle Dairy off Gekeler Lane, 1950. Previous: U.S. commercial airmail service began with a 1926 flight to Boise’s riverside municipal airport. Bronco Stadium now sits on the site.
South Boise begins at the southern banks of the meandering Boise River and flows south to the interstate, roughly flanked by Capitol Boulevard to the west and Amity Road on the east. It includes Bronco Stadium and the main Boise State University campus, nearly the entire Broadway streetscape, Boise Avenue, ParkCenter Boulevard, Barber Park and the Micron Technology complex.

South Boise claims a chunk of the Oregon Trail, which wound down from the east Bench and followed the Boise River along what is now Boise Avenue. Shoshones camped near the future city, supplying fish to the pioneers. With the gold rush of the 1860s, the south side of the river blossomed with farms, ranches and small neighborhoods. Irrigators built ditches and canals for crops and livestock. In 1878, William Morris built a canal. Morris’s nephew William Ridenbaugh built a flour and sawmill near the lip of the bench above future Ann Morrison Park.

With the completion of the Broadway Bridge in 1892, only the second local bridge to cross the river, people in the community traveled more easily to and from
the growing vibrant businesses downtown, further expanding the area. In 1898, children attended the first District Six schoolhouse, later to be rebuilt and named Garfield. A close-knit and growing neighborhood called South Boise started at the Broadway Bridge, ran south to present-day Garfield School, west on Boise Avenue to Ninth and then north to the Ninth Street Bridge where it followed the river back to Broadway. It was incorporated in 1902 as a village.

In 1905 the interurban streetcar system extended from Main Street across the Broadway Bridge, giving bloom to Ivywild, an early streetcar neighborhood on the south end of Broadway Avenue below Federal Way. In 1913 the City of Boise annexed South Boise.

The city’s first airport was in South Boise. Built in 1926 on a strip of land south of the river between Ninth Street and Broadway Avenue, the airport housed Varney Airlines, a fledgling airmail and passenger airline that became United Airlines. Later, the airport site gave way to what is now Boise State University’s campus. In 1932 the doors opened to Boise Junior College, then sponsored by the Episcopal Church, at First and Idaho. The school moved to the old airport site in 1940. In 1969 the school officially entered the state’s higher education system as Boise State College and adopted its current moniker in 1974.
South includes the Southeast Boise Neighborhood Association and the South Boise Village Neighborhood Association. Notable neighborhoods include River Run, Ivywild, Gekeler, Manitou, Barber and Bown Crossing. South residential and business architecture styles include a mix from Queen Anne to bungalow, block-style to postmodern. Many of the earlier homes and business structures were built from locally available materials such as sandstone and river rocks.

Our featured South examples of quintessential Boise include a diverse mixture of streetscapes, the old and the new, places to work and play.

**Broadway**

From Main Street to Interstate 84

**Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact**

Broadway Avenue runs for two and a half miles in a straight north-south line from Interstate 84 to Main Street and is the first connection from the east into downtown Boise. At its complex north end junction, Broadway and Main share an intersection with Warm Springs, Idaho Street and Avenue B.
It was around 1890 when the Colorado Investment Company designed “Broadway,” which, at 100 feet across, measures twenty feet wider than any other original Boise street. In 1892, a 210-foot long Broadway bridge opened, making it the second river crossing in Boise. (The original bridge was replaced in 1956.) Until 1913, when South Boise was annexed, Broadway was considered to be two streets with the same name, divided at the river. After the annexation, some Boiseans staged an unsuccessful bid to rename the street “Reclamation Avenue” south of the river to avoid the confusion of having two streets in the city with the same name.

Peppered along its path are a variety of buildings and architectural styles, from homes to business offices, colonial to postmodern. There even are several houses on Broadway made from rocks pulled from the river. One example, built in 1911, is the stone house at 210 Broadway, now “Jana’s Hair Cuttin’ Store.”

University Plaza at 960 Broadway is a classic postmodern building with walls of glass that reflect its environment and surroundings. Built in 1983, the 89,142 square-foot building features a two-story atrium lobby.
Today, Broadway is a major traffic connector and an essential link to Bronco Stadium and the University. Daily services and pastimes to benefit college students and the community line both sides of the street. There are service stations, banks, laundries, thrift stores, massage parlors, barber shops; a grocery store, several shopping centers, car washes; sandwich shops, fast food, ethnic and fancy eateries, restaurants and a number of bars, sports bars and even a hookah bar and a condom shop. It is sign-encroached, architecturally mismatched, traffic-impacted, essential and alive and gets a four-star rating.

Broadway Avenue complements local history. Its features are well proportioned. Although it promotes drivable neighborly interaction, its walkability is limited, so it fails utility. All blocks of Broadway work together and individually. It is memorable and carries emotional weight.

**Bronco Stadium**

1910 University Drive

**Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact**

In 1970, Bronco Stadium, also referred to as “The Blue,” opened to much fanfare. Designed by Nat Adams, the stadium is home to Boise State University football and the Roady’s Humanitarian Bowl. It gets its colorful nickname from its artificial blue turf. Boise State was the first school to have an entire field done in a special color. Boiseans call it “The Blue.”

The stadium has increased seating to accommodate more and more fans. In 1974 the number jumped from its original 14,500 seats to 20,000 when the upper east-side deck was added. By 1996, portable seating in the end zones pumped the number up to 22,600. Thirty-thousand fans filled the stands in 1997. Today, thanks to the stadium’s addition of the 2008 Stueckle Sky Center and a few more seats, there is room for 33,500.

Blue-tinted University Plaza flanks Bronco Stadium on Broadway. Opposite: Elevator shafts anticipate the stadium’s expansion, 2008.
The stadium’s architecture is impressive, with concrete cantilever arches that support the upper decks and a “brutal” style. Premium seating, an entertainment/meeting center and the wildly popular tailgate culture before home games all contribute to its five-star rating. Thanks to The Bronco’s recent winning football seasons and especially the national television exposure gained through their 2007 and 2010 Tostitos Fiesta Bowl wins, attending a football game at Bronco Stadium is a much sought-after experience.

It is uniquely Boise, fits and complements local history; the features are well proportioned and promote neighborly interaction. The stadium’s features also work as a whole and individually and are quite memorable. Bronco Stadium truly reinforces a Boise identity.
**ParkCenter Boulevard**

From Park Avenue to Apple Street, including the ParkCenter Business Complex and featuring the Alscott Building, 501 Baybrook Court

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

ParkCenter Boulevard is an upscale streetscape that runs along the Boise River. It has greenbelt access and is home to several parks, high-end and newly built residences, apartments, town homes and businesses, hotels, a mall and a handful of restaurants and fast food eateries. Its two-word, double uppercase, strung-together name reflects its mixed-use nature.

ParkCenter began with a boutique mall and the corporate headquarters of Ore-Ida Foods. When the potato giant relocated to Pittsburgh, Boise State purchased the Ore-Ida building for a university research park. In 2001 the West ParkCenter Bridge opened a link to the Boise Connector. In 2009 the East ParkCenter Bridge captured the south-bound traffic from Barber Valley and Harris Ranch.

About a dozen modernist-style office buildings perch along ParkCenter Boulevard, overlooking the river. A prime
Storm clouds over Columbia Village off Federal Way. Built on a triangle of south-side land near Micron Technology, Inc. the subdivision surrounds a sports complex with 20 athletic fields. Next: The City of South Boise had an Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I0OF) meeting hall and its own fire department.
example is the Alscott Building. Built in 1997 the 31,000 square-foot glass and concrete two-story structure was designed by BRS Architects. It is built on the banks of the Boise River and presents a different facade from every angle. A natural rock waterfall flows through a cavernous lobby to a riverside pool, where a structural two-story glass curtain wall divides it. The curved glass walls illuminate the interior and give panoramic views of the Boise River and the foothills to those inside. The interior is finished with imported wood paneling, custom tile and ornate metalwork. In 2002 The City of Boise lauded the Alscott Building with a Design Review award for its innovative design.

ParkCenter Boulevard exudes an attitude. It gives a nod to corporate America and Anywhere, U.S.A., but retains a true Boisean essence. It complements local history in its painstaking efforts to protect the natural environment. Its features are well proportioned
and, with greenbelt access, it is walkable, bikeable and drivable; it promotes neighborly interaction. However, it fails impact. Its features work together and individually but are not altogether memorable nor do they carry emotional weight.

**Bown Crossing and the Bown House**

**Bown Way from Boise Avenue to ParkCenter Boulevard**

*l Identity * Scale * Utility * Consistency * Impact

Bown Crossing: Built in 2006 by Erstad Architects and created by O’Neill Enterprises, Bown Crossing is a mixed-use development in South Boise purposefully modeled around the concept of an old-fashioned neighborhood, with sidewalks, close-by shopping and professional services. It is designed with landscaping and water features to visually bind the residential community with local businesses.

The 35-acre community includes 92 residential lots (single family residential homes, patio homes, town homes and lofts) and 59,000 square-feet of retail and restaurant space. Everything is nestled together in a foot-traffic friendly design.
By accessing Bown Way, Boise Avenue traffic connects to ParkCenter Boulevard, which gives the community another bee-line route to downtown Boise, the river, the greenbelt and foothills. The marketplace includes a dentist, a veterinarian/pet shop, an old-fashioned, Willy Wonka-esque candy store, pizza, sushi, steak, cocktails, live music and dancing. It has sidewalks, parking behind the buildings (to promote more walkability) and bicycle racks. The retail space caters to locally owned establishments; chain stores and corporate vendors are shunned. Plans include a future library (next to Riverside Elementary) and the community works to protect its natural environment and riparian areas. The retail space is in the new urbanism architectural style, while houses, patio and town homes and lofts range from Italian villas to contemporary styles. In 2007, Bown Crossing received an Idaho Smart Growth award.

The nearby Bown House recalls the South’s farming and ranching era. In 1865, Joseph and Temperance Bown homesteaded a 240-acre ranch about three miles east of Boise. Built in 1879 out of sandstone blocks hauled from Table Rock quarry north of the Boise River, the Joseph Bown House is one of the oldest buildings in Boise and the oldest one standing in South Boise. The house is built in classic Italian style, with 20-inch sandstone walls. The stone made the fortress home warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It has a cupola observatory and surrounding widow’s walk and is next to the Oregon Trail. The Bown House is a standing example of the early farming and ranching that was ubiquitous in the area.

The sandstone Bown House on the campus of Riverside School. Built in 1879, the house is now a pioneer museum. Opposite: Bown Crossing, a mixed-use townhouse and shopping district.
In 1988 the building was threatened when the Independent School District of Boise bought the land as a future school site. The Idaho Historic Preservation Council convinced the school district to keep the Bown house. They turned it into a teaching museum for children and it is regularly open to the public. In 1995 the project won a National Preservation Honor Award from the National Trust.

Together, the planned neighborhood of Bown Crossing and the historic Bown House are five-star quintessential. They complement local history. Their features are well proportioned and promote neighborly interaction. They work together and individually, are memorable and carry emotional weight.
Prisoners quarried Table Rock Mesa. Natural hot water and streetcars made Warm Springs an exclusive address.
Banker C.W. Moore ignited a real estate boom on Warm Springs Avenue with his 1891 Victorian showplace. Previous: Mary and Margaret Eastman in their Warm Springs sun room, about 1950.
The City of Boise defines East as four neighborhoods: the East End, Warm Springs Mesa, Harris Ranch and Riverlands East. Elegant Warm Springs Avenue is the district’s architectural showcase. Tourist attractions include a territorial prison, pioneer cemetery, botanical garden and foothill trails. Landmarks include Boise’s hillside “B” and cross-lit Table Rock Mesa. Older neighborhoods have walkable streets and gridded service alleys. Their dominant working-class housing style is Craftsman Bungalow. The grandest of the grand of the avenue houses are Queen Anne, Tudor and Mission Revival. East Enders support two of the city’s few surviving neighborhood stores.

The area is rich with history. In the era of the Snake River fur trade, the east foothills marked a free-trade zone that historians have called “Peace Valley.” Natives sometimes sent smoke signals from Table Rock Mesa. In 1819 the Boise Shoshone hosted a peace-treaty trade rendezvous for dozens of Northwest tribes. Canadian trapper Donald McKenzie, counting campfires, estimated 10,000 natives. Mountain legends like Jed Smith, Jim
Bridger, Thomas "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick later trapped and traded below Table Rock Mesa. Captain Benjamin Bonneville called the east Boise canyons "sublime." Legend has it that Bonneville's French-speaking trappers, in 1832, named the future city. Allegedly they crested a ridge near Lucky Peak. Seeing a wooded river, they cried "Les bois! Les bois! Voyez les bois!" ("The woods! The woods! Look at the woods!"). But the City of Trees was founded 31 years later. And Wooded River, or "Riviere Boisée" as the French Canadians called it, had been well known to western trappers since before McKenzie's time.

A wagon road to Idaho City snaked up the East Boise foothills in the era of the Boise gold rush. Another road followed the river to a hot water plunge near Harris Ranch. Warm Springs Avenue takes its name from that natural spa.

Flash floods led to East Boise's first big construction projects. In 1869, the Idaho Statesman reported that floods had damaged a foothills cemetery, eroding the shallow graves. Three years later the Fraternal Order of Masons relocated some of the graves to a gated cemetery at the east end of Main Street. A long wooden flume funneled the floods into a system of drainage canals. Flume Street near Pioneer Cemetery recalls those seasons of flooding. A pioneer drainage canal still parallels Warm Springs Avenue.

The East End's first big architectural project was the Romanesque Revival territorial penitentiary. Built in 1870, it rose on Table Rock sandstone. Prison labor cleared the trails and quarried the stone from the south face of the mesa. Prison riots destroyed the original stone cellblock in 1872.

Meanwhile, below the prison Boiseans noticed a steamy marsh that never iced in winter. Shoshones held vigils there during the Indian wars. On Christmas night 1890, Christopher W. Moore hit 170-degree water with a gushing artesian well. Moore imported miles of wooden pipe and founded a water company. At Warm Springs and Walnut, he built a towering Victorian showplace—the first in the nation with piped geothermal heat. Warm Spring's Avenue quickly became Boise's most exclusive address. Its sensational attraction was a Moorish Revival entertainment palace called The Natatorium. Built in 1892, it was designed...
by Montana State Architect James C. Paulsen. The Natatorium, or “Nat,” featured an enormous geothermal swimming pool. There also was a retractable pool-sized dance floor. There were card rooms, dance floors, carnival rides and private hot-water baths.

The East End evolved into a tranquil mix of architectural gems. By 1910 the Craftsman Bungalows had edged out the ornate gingerbread of older Victorian styles. Low roofs now covered functional porches. Bungalow brackets and rafters celebrated the skill of American craftsmanship at a time when working people needed affordable family homes. Today East End Bungalow lovers still resist the suburban-style ramblers and the boxy International style. The debate revolves around what Boiseans consider historic. In the East End, one of the youngest of eight Boise historic districts, a citizen preservation commission decides.

The lighted cross on Table Rock Mesa also has sparked controversy. Erected by the Boise Jaycees in 1956, the cross was originally built on a small square of state-owned land. In 1995, Boiseans marched in protest when a Chicago-based civil libertarian threatened to sue to take down the cross.

Another controversy of the 1990s was a housing project near boulders called Castle Rock. East Enders feared that a ridge-top subdivision would spoil their foothill views. Fort Hall Shoshone Bannocks told the Boise City Council that the rocks above the East End were a native burial site. City Council resolved the dispute with $500,000 for a hillside nature preserve.

Architecturally, the East is most quintessential along Warm Springs Avenue. We also comment on a neighborhood market, a swimming pool and the mesa that Bonneville reported while mapping the Oregon Trail.
Warm Springs Avenue  
From Broadway to the Trolley House  

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

In 1891 the Boise Water Works piped hot water to C.W. Moore’s Victorian mansion on Warm Springs Avenue. Two years later the Oregon Short Line built a depot near residential Grove Street. Hot water and the noise of the trains relocated the fashionable and the wealthy from Grove to Warm Springs. Leaded glass, crystal doorknobs and geothermal heating recall the avenue’s fashionable past.

Today the houses on Warm Springs are protected by a city historic preservation district. Notable landmarks include the John Morrison House at 615 Warm Springs. From 1903 to 1905, when Morrison served as Idaho’s governor, his Queen Anne was a governor’s mansion. Across the street in 1910, schoolteacher Cynthia Mann donated a block of land for an orphanage. Mann’s
Idaho Children’s Home mixed Western Colonial architecture with touches of the Mission Revival Style. The avenue’s signature Tudor Revival is the C.C. Anderson House. Built in 1925, it features backyard terraced gardens designed by New York’s famous Frederick Law Olmstead landscape architectural firm. Perhaps the most famous of the Warm Springs mansions is Boise’s original hot water house. Built by water entrepreneur and banker C.W. Moore, the Moore-Cunningham house resembles a French chateau. Boiseans have alleged that the house is haunted. With jade wallpaper, ivy-covered brick, wrought-iron gates and a towering attic, it certainly looks the part.

Warm Springs is walkable and memorable. Trees, hitching posts, replica streetlights give the avenue consistency and appropriate scale. But the avenue falls short on neighborly interaction. Mysterious and aristocratic, with tall hedges that obscure some of the city’s finest architecture, Warm Springs is four-star quintessential, falling short on community access.

The Natatorium, The Trolley House and M&W Market

1816, 1821 and 1835 Warm Springs Avenue

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

The Natatorium, affectionately called “The Nat,” was Boise’s first regional tourist attraction. Built in 1892, it was a six-story 150,000 square-foot entertainment showplace and once the nation’s largest indoor spa. Its Moorish Revival fantasy architecture featured an Arabesque boardwalk arcade. Six governors celebrated their inaugural balls at The
Natatorium. For a nickel, the spa could be reached by streetcar. In 1907 the venue expanded with the White City amusement park. White City—possibly named for the white buildings of Chicago’s 1893 world fair exposition—had a roller coaster, miniature railway, carousel, outdoor dance pavilion, roller rink, photography studio and boating pond. The hot water remained the major attraction. “These waters have rare minerals,” said a 1905 promotional brochure. “They are of great value in all kinds of skin diseases, digestive and liver troubles, rheumatism, gout, ulcers of the stomach, etc.”

The Nat stood until 1934. Rotted from mineral-rich geothermal steam, the palace was badly damaged during a windstorm. Beams from the roof nearly killed a swimmer when
they crashed into the pool. The wooden rollercoaster lasted another decade before the city had it condemned.

Today behind Adams School is a modern pool with a hydro tube that approximates the Nat’s location. Geothermal water remains. So does the Nat’s old trolley depot. Now a restaurant called The Trolley House, it dates back to the original 1892 Warm Springs streetcars. A gallery of old photographs features the Nat and the trolley cars. An exterior mural shows an apple-red streetcar.

East of the Trolley House is the city’s last remaining M&W Market. Founded in 1961 by Lou Mendiola and Fred B. Wisner, the market once competed toe-to-toe with Boise grocer magnate Joe Albertson. Both grocers had seven Boise stores in the 1960s. Today the neighborhood market features a meat department with a butcher. Styrofoam cups of worms still sell to the angler bound for Lucky Peak.

**Table Rock Mesa, the Boise “B,” the Old Idaho State Penitentiary, Idaho Botanical Garden**

2355 North Penitentiary Road

**Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact**

The Table Rock Mesa area is at the end of Old Penitentiary Road and abuts a stacked volcanic rock formation. The Shoshones thought the rocks looked like a nesting eagle and called it Eagle Rock. Early settlers thought the boulders looked medieval and called them Castle Rocks. While the cross atop Table Rock marks the spot, hiking and bicycling trails beckon many outdoor adventurists to the mesa’s steep face and adjoining Castle Rock formation.

In the 1940s community leaders began working to find a solution for preserving the foothills and the trails that crisscrossed them. In 1992 the Ridge to Rivers Trail System
evolved from the combined efforts of local, state and federal agencies. Today there are more than 75 miles of foothills trails. Volunteers help maintain them and visitors trek along trails where foxes, deer, coyote, rabbits, hawks and eagles are daily sights.

B is for Boise. In 1931 Ward Rolfe, Bob Krummes, Kenneth Robertson and Simeon Coonrod, recent graduates of Boise High School, formed the “B” from rocks at the top of Table Rock mesa. It is the Boise B but from time to time independent locals slap on a coat of paint to celebrate their school colors: red for Boise High, blue or orange for Boise State Broncos or green for Borah High.

Below the B is Idaho’s old penitentiary—perhaps the nation’s best preserved territorial prison, now a tourist attraction with a thriving museum. From 1870 to 1973, the Old Pen incarcerated more than 13,000 inmates. Two hundred fourteen were women. Ten convicts were executed by hanging, all of them men. The youngest prisoner was a ten-year-old boy; the oldest was 81, a man sentenced for cattle rustling.

Bucolic paths of the Idaho Botanical Garden wind toward the Boise foothills behind the Old Pen museum. Nineteen gardens bloom on 33 acres. Thousands of twinkling lights draw tourists for a December event called Winter Garden aGlow.

Table Rock, the “B,” the Old Pen and botanical gardens have come to define the foothills of East Boise. Memorable and inviting, they rate five quintessential stars.
Boise Depot towers above a postwar shopping center. A freeway theater complex is like a city unto itself.
The City of Boise defines West as 13 neighborhoods on tablelands known as the Bench. Geologically, there are three "benches" formed by the bluffs of ancient rivers flooded with snowmelt, each rising about 60 feet. Historically, Boiseans have referred to the Bench as one single housing district. It begins at the lip of the bluffs that rise above Garden City. Its southern end is the Boise airport. Its western edge may be Curtis or Orchard. Beyond Towne Square Mall, where large lots have sprawling houses, Boiseans mostly call their neighborhoods West.

More than 5,000 people settled in Ada County before farmers, tapping the Boise River, developed the arid Bench. In 1877 an act of Congress offered a chance to patent arid land for as little as $1.25 an acre. A Wells Fargo freight agent named William Morris immediately claimed more than 7,000 acres and filed on water rights for the future Morris-Ridenbaugh Canal. In 1878, shanty Morristown on Morris Hill housed about 70 canal builders. News of Morris's success reached New York
investors in 1884. Engineer Arthur De Wint Foote told the investors that only “slight modification” would be needed to shape the Bench into valuable crop land. Meanwhile, Boise Mayor John Lemp developed the Settlers Canal Company. The 1900 census found 19,056 people in the Boise Valley. About 1,650 farms divided 113,205 acres.

Irrigators west of Vista grew dozens of school districts. Most were sparsely settled with only elementary schools. Aggressive annexation began with the Whitney subdivision on Vista. In 1947, Vista Theater (now Bruneel Tire) anchored the city’s first postwar shopping center. South Bench residents successfully petitioned for a Whitney Fire District. An oil tank farm sprouted on Curtis. In 1956, Boiseans endorsed a $1.7 million school bond for a second high school. Named after Senator William Borah, the school opened on West Cassia in 1958. Voters also approved bonds to extend curbs, gutters and sewers to 6,000 county homes rising near Ustick and Cole.

In 1961, with a strong endorsement from the Idaho State Legislature, the City of Boise repealed its no-growth anti-annexation charter. Over the next four years the city doubled in size. Zoning discouraged corner neighborhood stores and high-density apartment houses. At Overland and Orchard, developer Harry Dram cleared 22 acres for the Hillcrest Shopping Plaza. Saint Alphonsus Hospital moved to Curtis Road. KTVB television relocated from downtown to Fairview Avenue. Garden City lured a convention hotel.
As late as 1975, city fathers still hoped to preserve a buffer of agriculture between Meridian and Boise. City planners worried that leapfrog growth and sprawl would sap commercial downtown. Nevertheless, growth leaped west with Boise Towne Square Mall, the Spectrum theater complex, Hewlett-Packard on Chinden and the LDS Temple on Cole. Big-box retailers followed: Wal-Mart, Costco and Lowe’s. By the mid-1980s, Boise reached
Meridian Road. “Boise faced geographic realities,” wrote J.M. Neil in his history of postwar Boise. “The only realistic direction was west, regardless of the city’s intention.”

Architecturally the West has no single theme or style. Cottages mix with Western style half-acre ramblers. Motels front shopping centers. Grand houses on Crescent Rim shadow modest streets with crowded apartment houses. Boise’s depot remains the West’s most iconic landmark. The West is elsewhere defined by strip malls, cul-de-sacs, the interstate, an ornate theater complex and the Western Idaho Fair.

**Boise Depot**

*2603 W. Eastover Terrace at Capitol Boulevard*

- **Identity**
- **Scale**
- **Utility**
- **Consistency**
- **Impact**


Carrere, Hastings, Shreve & Lamb of New York City designed the Union Pacific depot with red tiles and stucco in the California Mission Revival Style. Its bell tower rose 96 feet. Boiseans immediately passed a bond issue to rebuild Seventh Street as Capitol Boulevard. Completed in 1931, the mile-long boulevard crossed the river on an innovative concrete-arch bridge. It climbed to seven acres of formal gardens that were named for railroad man Howard V. Platt.

Six passenger trains served the depot each day in the 1940s. Regular Union Pacific passenger service continued until 1971. From 1990 to 1993, the Morrison-Knudsen Company completed a $3 million meticulous restoration. The city purchased the building in 1996.

The depot marks Boise’s gateway. With Capitol Boulevard, it realizes a turn-of-the-century dream for a landscaped and welcoming street with statues, parks and museums. The dream gave way to billboards in the 1940s and 1950s. Encroachments and bad architecture have further muddied the gateway. But Capitol Boulevard and its depot are five-star
quintessential. Both recall a prosperous time when Boiseans taxed themselves to finance public improvements, when public transit was taken for granted and when soaring architecture was an engine of community pride.

**Vista Avenue**

Vista from the Boise Airport to Federal Way

Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Subdivisions off Vista began in the 1890s. Rose Hill was platted in 1912. When the municipal airport relocated in 1938, the avenue's southern end was still unpaved. The depot brought stucco homes in the 1930s. Postwar suburban housing promoted annexation. In 1947 at Cassia, Vista Theater opened, soon followed by a deli-catessen, pastry shop and the Whitehead drug store. Developer Ernest Day subdivided a farm for the Vista Village Shopping Center. By 1953 there were groceries and three drive-thru hamburger restaurants, including a neon A&W franchise.

"The area abounds with historic significance," writes Bench historian Ann Felton, a former carhop on Vista. But neglect and the loss of landmarks has severed historical connections. Now Vista is largely divorced from its rich history. Little but
The Cottage on the Bench

©Ward Hooper
parking remains of the postwar suburban identity. Sparse and generic, with dangerous sidewalks and four-lanes of traffic, it stumbles on visual impact.

Edwards Boise Stadium 22 and IMAX Complex
7709 Overland Road

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Journalist Joel Garreau popularized the term “edge city” to characterize places that could not exist without freeways and automobiles. Edge cities were auto-dependent cultural attractions with theaters, restaurants, big-box retailers and acres of surface parking. They were “cities” with more jobs than bedrooms. Instant places, they boomed near freeways on open land where no communities had before existed.

Edwards Theater in the Boise Spectrum complex realizes the edge city idea. Developed in 1987, it paved 30 acres where freeways had reconfigured Overland and Cole. The complex is pure entertainment. Edwards 22 and IMAX are its major tenants. Its chief entertainment attractions are 4,500 sloping stadium-style seats. Jam-packed on weekends, the complex also has eateries and a video game arcade. “Spectrum was a planned development that has become a city-like metro-wide regional attraction,” said historian J.M. Neil.

With glitz and extravagance, Spectrum-Edwards features fantasy throw-away architecture—appropriate for movie houses and a nod to the Hollywood neon Main
Cold grey freeway concrete reflects the mood of the sky in Karen Woods's landscape study of Interstate 84. Previous: Elizabeth Wolf's 42-foot “Terra Firma” in the Boise airport, 2003; Edwards fantasy neon.
Street marques. Yet the complex stands like a city unto itself. There is no obvious link to the history of Boise. It also fails the utility test because the citizens of Spectrum City have no choice but to burn gas in their cars.

**Garden City’s Chinden Boulevard**

Chinden from the I-84 Connector to Glenwood Street

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Chinden is Boise’s quintessential service center. With RV sales, body shops, diners, motels and light industry, it embodies the “Boise” in Boise almost as much as any street in town.

The boulevard takes its name from Cantonese farmers who once gardened in the river’s floodplain. Chinese and garden collapsed into “Chinden.” In 1949 the boulevard bisected a “village” that incorporated so that tourists could play slot machines. Four years later, when the state outlawed slot machine gambling, the Village of Garden City attempted, but failed, to annex the rim of the Bench. Friction over annexation fueled a rivalry with Boise City. Decades of dispute over jurisdictions—over schools, sewers, growth boundaries and the Curtis Road extension—have so far derailed the dream of an unbroken river greenbelt. Demand for upscale river housing has strengthened the village tax base. Still, Garden City gets no respect. Its boulevard is too chaotic for weighty architectural impact and yet Chinden earns four stars. Chinden remains key to the Boise experience even if that blue-collar contribution is one that Boiseans prefer to forget.

All-night karaoke has replaced Chinden Boulevard’s Hi-Ho dance club. Opposite: The Western Idaho Fair.
The Western Idaho Fairgrounds sporadically come to life for horse racing, baseball and carnival entertainment. Crowded with tents in Augusts—with livestock and quilts and cherry pie competitions—the fair draws more than 245,000 visitors. Competitions include egg painting, elk calling, arm wrestling and scarecrow making. It is the closest thing Idaho has to an old-time state fair.

Annual fairs in Boise City date back to the decade of statehood. In 1902, when the Idaho Intermountain Fair Association developed 80 acres on Fairview at Orchard, Buffalo “Wild Bill” Cody...
performed at the event. Promoters later added a rodeo called the Boise Stampede. In 1967 the fair moved to its current Glenwood location. In 1989, leasing agreements with Ada County brought in Hawks Memorial Stadium and Les Bois racetrack.

Architecturally, the fairground buildings are practical but generic. Parking can be a confusion. For identity, scale, and consistency, it rates three quintessential stars.

Horses have raced at the annual fair in Boise since 1897. Disputes over off-track betting and purse-splitting threaten to suspend the season in 2010.
7 quintessential BEYOND

The city has remade its natural setting. Parks and a ski resort shape Boise’s own sense of place.
The English poet John Ruskin understood that the architecture of cities should complement the natural landscape, and that the most wondrous of human artistic creations could never hope to surpass the wonder of nature’s sublime. “An architect,” wrote Ruskin, four years before the founding of Boise, “should live as little in cities as a painter. Send him out to our hills, and let him study there what Nature understands by a buttress, and what by a dome.”

Ruskin proposed seven criteria—seven “lamps,” he called them—for illuminating the extent to which great buildings approached the sublime. Quintessential Boise takes a simpler approach. We see architectural form reflected in the ways a city’s buildings and streets have historically functioned. We feature authentic places that meet community needs.

Yet Ruskin’s concern for nature is also essential to the Boise in Boise. The city’s connection to the barren of Idaho’s outback has been a familiar theme since the era of the Oregon Trail. Discovered and rediscovered—as an outpost and oasis, as an Athens in the sagebrush, as a gateway to hunting and skiing—Boise has always been
boosted as an urban center on a wild edge. Boiseans value the edges. Where water laps on sandy beaches, where jet boats roar through rock-walled canyons, Boise builds civic identity. Hikers and bicyclists ply Boise’s bucolic greenbelt. Shakespearean follies play out against a wooded foothill backdrop. A mountain lures workers away from their desks to schuss through the snow. These natural edges—the river, the foothills, the mountains—are quintessential parts that help define the whole.

Some edges are like architecture. Purposely engineered, they look more natural than nature ever intended. Bogus Basin, for example, was thoroughly mined, clear-cut and grazed before the U.S. Forest Service began building a trail system, conserving the slopes as a park. The lake at Lucky Peak is an engineered flood impoundment. Its dams and dikes untangled the braids of a wandering channel, making the Boise River floatable. Today when Boiseans take the plunge into a seemingly natural river, they float a human-made floodway that looks nothing like the stream Bonneville saw.

**Lucky Peak State Park**

9725 E. Idaho 21

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Drive eight miles east of Boise on Idaho 21 in high summer and you’ll find sunbathers lolling on beaches. Water enthusiasts rev up their jet skis or go boating. Families spread checkerboard picnic tablecloths. Scuba divers practice in the murky waters and occasionally local preachers wade into low-crested waves with new congregation members for a baptismal dip.

Engineer Arthur Foote was one of the first to see the potential of a dam above the city. Foote and his wife, renowned author and illustrator Mary Hallock Foote, built a sandstone house near what is now Discovery Park. The U.S. Reclamation Service completed the dam after Foote’s project
went bankrupt. In 1912, Diversion Dam opened, feeding the New York Canal. Four years later, at Arrowrock, the reclamation service pioneered gravity-arch construction with the world’s tallest dam. Lucky Peak Dam was a belated response to a series of punishing floods. Built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1949 to 1955, the gravel dam created a popular beach called Sandy Point.

Like memorable architecture, they complement our history and carry emotional weight.

**Bogus Basin Mountain Resort**

2600 N. Bogus Basin Road

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Bogus Basin offers 2,600 snowy acres for downhill and Nordic skiers. With twinkle-lit slopes for night skiing, a tubing hill and two cozy lodges, the ski area rises above Boise’s smog inversion. Sundrenched on days when the filthiest air blankets the valley, Bogus is Boise’s Prozac, its buster of the winter blues.

In 1941 the non-profit Bogus Basin Recreational Association incorporated and sold $25 memberships. However, the start of WWII stalled the opening—and first rope-towed skiers—until December 20, 1942. Four years later, Morrison-Knudsen Co. helped install the first T-bar lift. J.R. Simplot added T-bar heavy “lifting” in 1953. The curling muddy road got a coat of pavement in the 1960s. In 1973, skiers could zigzag down the newly opened backside to a second Bogus lodge.
Crash-prone Meridian Speedway. Opposite: Shakespeare under the stars has been a Boise tradition since 1976.

Meridian Speedway and Water Tower
335 E. First Street, Meridian

* Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Ahead of the NASCAR craze, Meridian Speedway is a next-door Boise experience, just 10 miles west on Interstate 84 to Meridian exit 44. Meridian’s 117-foot onion-shaped water tower dominates the track. Saturday nights bring thousands for 50-lap sprint-car racing. Novelty events include go-carts, vintage jalopies, tractor-pulls, SUV jet boat pulls, and “smash-o-rama” demolition derbies. “Thunder dog” race-what-you-bring competitions pit minivans against beater sedans.

Opened in 1951 the quarter-mile oval speedway is one of the nation’s oldest in continuous operation. Blacktop arrived in 1962. Racing legend Davey Hamilton began his career at the speedway when his father managed the track. Crashes have sheared hundreds of fence posts. Collisions have launched cars into walls.
and fenders into the grandstands. One spectacular crash flipped a car through the speedway's scoreboard.

Straightforward and functional, the speedway is hardly the Statehouse. It remains quintessential nevertheless.

Idaho Shakespeare Festival Amphitheater
5657 Warm Springs Avenue
★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

About five miles east of Boise, nestled in a wooded cove, thespians perform spring to fall in a grotto-like, open-air theater under the stars. Boiseans pack picnic baskets and carry in backpacks of wine and cheese so they can spread out to watch live performances on blankets and pillows, tables and chairs.

In 1976 a fund-raising festival for the Women's and Children's Alliance performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* down by the river. Today through an agreement with the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, the festival's home is surrounded by a nature reserve where theatergoers get to see added attractions such as indigenous plants and flowers, deer, waterfowl and fox.
It is a unique experience and five-star quintessential. The park-like amphitheater is welcoming, functional, and well proportioned. Colorfully Elizabethan yet causally Idahoan, the festival celebrates Boise and its natural setting in unique and memorable ways.

The Boise River Greenbelt
Through Boise and Garden City

★ Identity ★ Scale ★ Utility ★ Consistency ★ Impact

Some say the greenbelt began in 1963 when a planner from California sold the city on the idea of a path between its riverside parks. Others say the greenbelt idea began when the Corps of Engineers sculpted the river with meandering dikes. Still others maintain that the credit rightly belongs to the 1972 Clean Water Act. Before that legislation, when effluent foamed in the pools and trash impounded the channel, the floodway was seldom a place Boiseans wanted to walk.

In 1963, in the city’s first 20-year comprehensive plan, Atkinson & Associates envisioned a riverside “east-west axis” with horse trails, walking paths and a scenic parkway. Four years later the city parks department began purchasing riverside lots. In 1971 the city council required a 70-foot minimum setback for all structures and parking. Another decade passed before city planners listed the greenbelt as “a major park system priority.”

Today the cherished greenbelt follows the Boise River from Discovery Park to Eagle, a distance of about 30 miles. Its parks and bridges are well proportioned. Memorable and functional, with benches for wildlife viewing and markers for historical sites, the greenbelt celebrates the human-made natural setting that gives Boise its own sense of place.

Boiseans share the greenbelt with eagles and great blue herons. From Barber through Garden City, the path links twelve riverfront parks.
Credits

It took a village to produce this tribute to Boise's architecture. Todd Shallat directed the book's production with artist Adele Thomsen. Shallat wrote captions and much of the copy for chapters 2 through 7. In addition to the names on our title pages, more than two dozen friends and colleagues made generous contributions. We gratefully acknowledge Mark Rudin, Errol Jones, Nancy Tacke, David Day, Alicia Dillon, Annie Shull, Carl Fritz, Chris Blanchard, Guen Johnson, Carolyn Bowler, Jamie Lange, Erstad Architects, Tim Buckley, Joshua Olsen, J.M. Neil, Barbara Perry Bauer, Tony Walsh, Jill Gill, Margaret Streeter, Cynthia Sanders, Arthur Skarrit, Tom Trusky, Stan Steiner, Tom Hummel, John Kelly, Katina Dutton, Carl Miller, Kathleen Lacey, Joan Johnson, Hannah Read, and Cliff Naumann, Dave Bieter and the Boise City Council.

Timberline High School's Andrew Swanson stands tall on behalf of the award-winning Boise Architecture Project. Founded in 2005 by Timberline educator Doug Stan Wiens, the project has involved more than 300 students in the photographing and documentation of neighborhood landmarks. More than 100 buildings, dams and bridges have been documented to date.
Sources


Planning documents describe neighborhood design standards; see, for example, “Blueprint Boise: Boise’s Comprehensive Plan,” public review draft (January 2010) at cityofboise.org; see also, the city historian’s bibliographies and reference essays at idahomatters.com. Key primary sources include the archives of the *Idaho Statesman* and the photos and vertical files at the Idaho State Historical Society Library and Archives. Timberline High School’s Boise Architecture Project documents more than 100 significant buildings at www.boisearchitecture.org.
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