

# A ULI VIRTUAL ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

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## EXPO IDAHO ADA COUNTY, IDAHO

Preserving, Celebrating, and Connecting  
the Future of Expo Idaho

June 21–24, 2021



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# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics.

Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries. The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2020 alone, more than 2,600 events were held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](http://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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# About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of the **ULI ADVISORY SERVICES** program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a

holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a three-and-a-half-day virtual Advisory Services panel (vASP) is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's vASP assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this vASP executive summary report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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# Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the panel would like to thank the Ada County Board of Commissioners for their sponsorship of this effort.

The panel would especially like to recognize Bob Batista, director of Expo Idaho; Richard Beck, director of Ada County Development Services; Lorna Jorgensen, deputy prosecuting attorney, Ada County; Brianna Bustos, communications and outreach coordinator of Ada County Development Services; and Elizabeth Duncan, communications manager for Ada County, for their leadership and work in preparation, support, and coordination of the virtual panel.

The panel would also like to thank the more than 50 community representatives and leaders who shared their perspectives, insights, and experiences during the panel.

The Urban Land Institute is grateful for the support of The JPB Foundation.



*The Western Idaho Fair at Expo Idaho.*

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## Introduction and Panel Scope

Located just outside Boise, owned by Ada County and surrounded by Garden City, Expo Idaho is a beloved 247-acre community gathering place, serving Ada County and the Treasure Valley region for decades as the site of the Western Idaho Fair and the Boise Hawks baseball stadium, as well as an event center and a place for education, agricultural heritage, and fun.

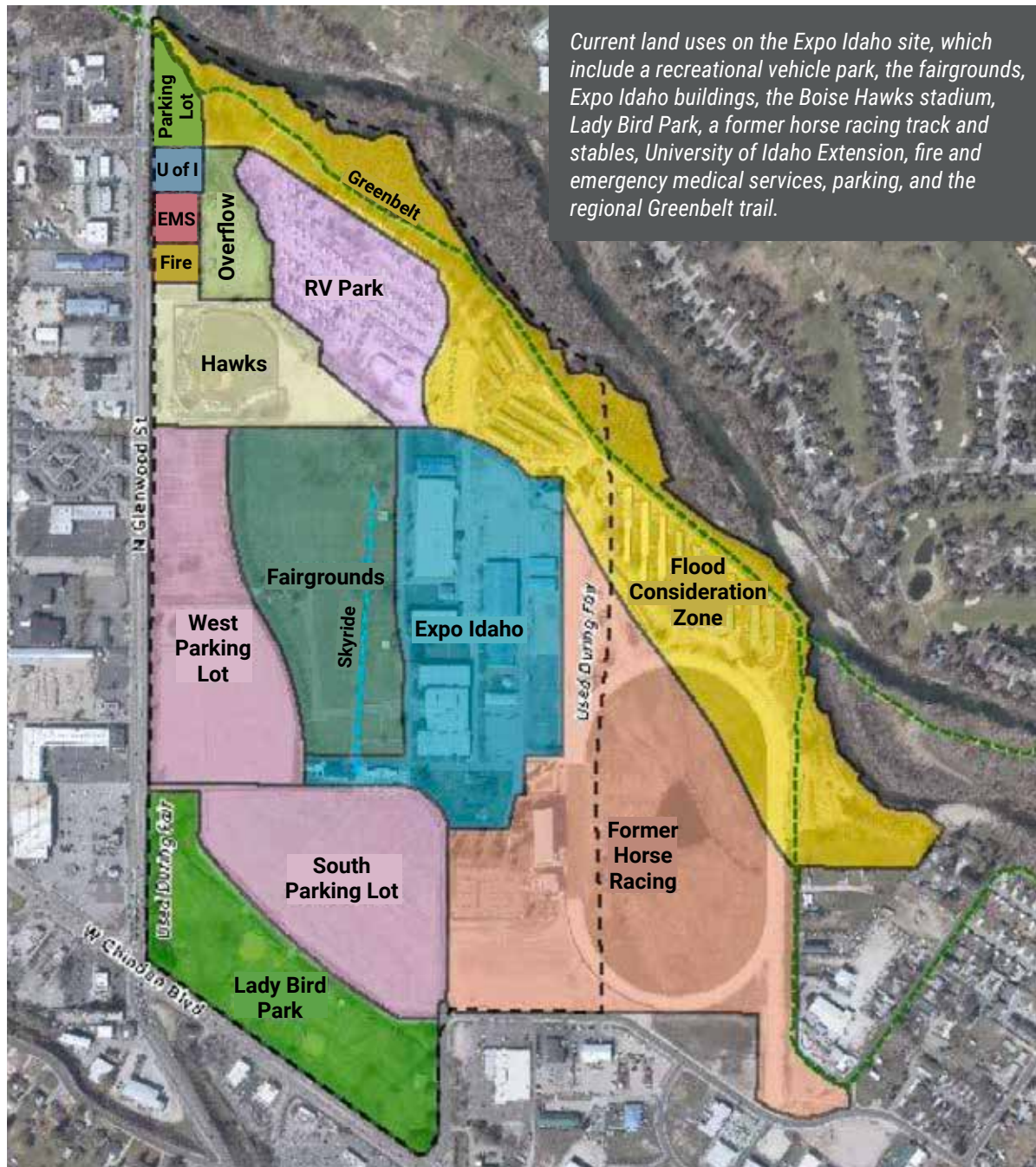
Boise and neighboring cities in Ada County are experiencing some of the most accelerated growth rates in the country. As Ada County has grown, the demand to improve or redevelop portions of Expo Idaho has been a topic of community discussion for many years, and the 2018 illegalization of pari-mutuel (historical) wagering on horse racing in Idaho moved the issue to the forefront by effectively rendering the site's 60-acre horse racing facilities unusable. Then in 2020, the Boise Hawks lost their Major League Baseball affiliation after a 30-year partnership, generating further conversation about the condition of the stadium on the Expo Idaho site.

While Expo Idaho is where the Treasure Valley goes to gather and connect, it is also a rare asset: a large site ready for strategic



*The grandstand at Expo Idaho.*

redevelopment in one of the country's fastest-growing urban areas. Ada County has an opportunity to lean into Expo Idaho's identity as a gathering place and enhance its status as a hub. This core identity is one of the site's unique strengths, aided by its relatively central location within the county.



## Panel Scope

In 2020, Ada County, Idaho, convened a group of local stakeholders—the Expo Idaho Citizens Advisory Committee (the Committee)—to provide input on the future uses and functions at Expo Idaho, which is the site of the Western Idaho Fair and many year-round community uses. After community engagement and deliberation, the Committee presented three development directions for the site for consideration by the Ada County Board of Commissioners.

Although components of each suggestion could stand alone or be combined in varying ways, the three directions proposed for the site are distinguished by leading themes. The first focused on an agricultural heritage center and outdoor education campus. The second on a sports, events, and recreation complex. The third envisioned a mixed-use town center. In all proposals, the Western Idaho Fair would remain on the site.

The Board of Commissioners asked the Advisory Services panel to consider the feasibility and economic impact of each of these scenarios to better understand the potential future uses of the site.

## Directions for Redevelopment

The Committee proposed the following three redevelopment directions to the Ada County Board of Commissioners as possible future uses for the site.



BRITTANY TEVERBAUGH

*A livestock competition at the Western Idaho Fair.*



IDAHO STATESMAN

*Baseball at the Boise Hawks stadium.*



KEN LUND, FLICKR

*City Creek Center in Salt Lake City is one example for a mixed-use town center at Expo Idaho.*

### **Development Direction 1: Agricultural Heritage and Outdoor Education Campus**

Emphasis on expanding and upgrading fairground facilities that host the yearly 10-day Western Idaho Fair, enabling year-round use of event space, increasing agricultural heritage uses, developing outdoor education areas, and preserving natural spaces and ecosystems.

### **Development Direction 2: Sports, Events, and Recreation Complex**

Emphasis on a new sports stadium and event venue, with supporting commercial retail and hotel uses. Includes additional sports fields and outdoor recreation amenities.

### **Development Direction 3: Mixed-Use Town Center**

Creation of a Garden City town center with housing, retail, government buildings and other services, and a central gathering place. Emphasis on a walkable and bikeable development, with the preservation of natural areas and upgraded Expo Idaho facilities.

## Framework and Panel's Key Recommendations

The panel's recommendations analyze the potential modifications proposed by the Citizens Advisory Committee, with a focus on economic tradeoffs and estimated costs. These recommendations include considerations for project implementation by the county and its partners.

In structuring recommendations, the panel developed fundamental principles to aid in framing and guiding Ada County's approach to the Expo Idaho site. These principles include preserving, celebrating, and connecting.

- **Preserve** unique resources, such as Lady Bird Park, green space, and the area along the Boise River, which is renowned for the high-quality habitat it provides to fish and other aquatic life.
- **Celebrate** heritage and community, like the Western Idaho Fair, Expo Idaho, and baseball on site.
- **Connect** with active and complementary uses that include a range of managed spaces and amenities. Embrace multiuse and expand collective expectations for what Expo Idaho can be.

With these guiding principles in mind, an overview of key panel recommendations follows.

### Think Big: Think Legacy

This project will have a significant legacy; plan for this legacy 50 years from now, and understand what it will take to operationally achieve it. Think also in terms of "and" rather than "or": the Expo Idaho site has potential to accommodate many uses that benefit the community.

### Take Key First Steps to Build Support

Ada County continues to gather significant public feedback on the future of Expo Idaho. This is commendable, and it enables the commissioners to proceed with making initial decisions about site redevelopment. The commissioners do not need to simultaneously resolve all questions about the site. Rather, these decisions present an opportunity to act on existing consensus and provide much needed and desired amenities, such as preserving the fair and increasing public green space.

This is an early win for everyone involved and a way to build momentum behind any larger redevelopment effort. These key steps will help position the site to meet the growing and changing needs of Ada County over the next several decades.

### Build on Existing Assets

Despite varying opinions about the future of Expo Idaho, reimagining and enhancing uses on this site is possible.

The panel proposes the following for site uses:

- **Make natural space a priority.** Preserving and expanding open space such as Lady Bird Park and adding recreational fields on the site are possible in any development scenario and are a community priority.
- **Keep sports and recreation on site.** Public recreation areas can complement green space. This includes programmable open space such as sports fields, capable of accommodating a variety of events, from flag football to soccer, baseball, and lacrosse. A new stadium on the site is possible, and in the right location can complement other uses. Further cost/benefit analysis, however, is needed.
- **Upgrade existing structures.** Improving the existing Expo Idaho buildings and adding structured parking on site can increase the revenue potential of Expo Idaho and allow the site to attract larger and more varied events year round. Structured parking also supports additional green space on the site.
- **Consider the possibility of mixed use.** A mixed-use development on the site is possible and should be phased last in the

development of the site. Such a development could be the economic engine behind long-term growth for the site and surrounding area.

### **Get Started on Keystone Projects**

Ada County can achieve this objective by moving Lady Bird Park adjacent to the Boise River, taking up some of the land previously used for horse racing and stables. This step already has the momentum of public opinion behind it. Existing constraints mean that this will take time to execute; however, moving Lady Bird Park is a keystone project that will unlock new opportunities, allowing Ada County and stakeholders to continue to push forward with desired redevelopment objectives.

### **Establish Project Champions and Enable Community Engagement**

Regardless of the eventual plan for the property, the panel strongly believes that an entity with a governing board that has clear goals, objectives, and guiding principles will be essential to the project's success. Just as guiding principles helped shape the Citizens Advisory Committee's development of its three proposed scenarios, guiding principles can also shape future activity on the Expo Idaho site.

This entity would manage open and frequent communication with the public regarding

intentions for the Western Idaho Fair, the Expo Idaho buildings, and green-space preservation, as well as an expected timeline for this generational project.

Those guiding principles will also introduce the region to the larger redevelopment goals and objectives for the site. To that end, the panel believes that this process requires the services of a skilled community engagement professional, one capable of conducting a layered process that reaches regional, county, and municipal stakeholders.

### **Prioritize Public Benefit in Guiding Principles**

As redevelopment of the site proceeds, the panel advises that Ada County keep community benefit and public use at the forefront of its decision-making process. Requirements might include the designation of privately owned public space, so that any business established on the Expo Idaho site adds another amenity to the site. Another tool might include use of ground leases to maintain public control of the property.

### **Create Election-Proof Governance**

The county would benefit from increased organizational focus for the site by designating an organizational body that has longevity beyond the terms of the Ada County Board of Commissioners, to shepherd this project through frequent changes of elected officials.

### **Build Partnerships for Financial Stability and Success**

Redeveloping a site as large and with as much potential as Expo Idaho requires a significant financial investment. By investing in the site to increase activity and incorporating the site into the county's portfolio of assets, Ada County can generate more revenue for the county and immensely increase the public benefit of the site.

Multiple funding sources are available, private funding can be leveraged, and creative partnerships can help support these costs. With strong planning and partnerships, Ada County can complete the redevelopment of Expo Idaho as an investment, leveraging financing tools to ultimately provide a higher quality of life and enhanced Expo Idaho for all its residents.

The remainder of this report outlines a framework and phased process for remaking the future of Expo Idaho, with economic and fiscal analyses based upon the information available. In addition, the panel recommends measures to ensure that progress continues beyond any change of membership on the Ada County Board of Commissioners. The panel wants to provide the board with enough information to take initial and decisive steps forward to set the larger redevelopment project up for success.

# Analysis of Citizens Advisory Committee Scenarios

After review of the three Citizens Advisory Committee development directions, the panel determined that despite constraints, components of all proposed development directions are feasible on the site, given the acreage. Though it is true that including all scenarios will require significant capital investment, it is also true that maintaining the site in its current state and making no changes to its uses will likewise require capital investment.

A critical constraint of the site as discovered through the panel process is the changing floodplain in the county that affects the study area. Although the benefits of this potential update are many, including increased safety and preservation of life and property downstream, the implications of such an update to the site are equally significant.

The Boise River, which borders the property, places constraints on the development potential of the northern and eastern portions of the Expo Idaho site. The existing floodplain line is restrictive and affects

future development because new development is discouraged within the current boundary. An updated and more expansive proposed floodplain line being considered for the Expo Idaho site would greatly expand the amount of land considered to be within the floodplain and therefore constrain further options for future use, affecting the overall site.

Any future uses of the Expo Idaho site will need to consider the updated floodplain line once finalized. This may affect the organization of uses on the site in relation to the river.

To provide the most comprehensive analysis of each potential development, the panel considered the costs and benefits of each proposed direction along with site constraints, such as the updated increased floodplain, and examined mechanisms available to achieve each use.



The existing and proposed floodplain lines on the Expo Idaho property. Violet represents the existing line. Magenta is the proposed line.

## Analysis of Proposed Land Uses

The Committee's recommendations noted that the leading themes they advanced can be combined in varying ways and their success will largely depend on factors such as community support, developer interest, and cost. The Committee also generally agreed that the site should accommodate uses such as natural spaces, Expo Idaho events, Greenbelt, Lady Bird Park, roads and pathways, and parking lots and structures, regardless of development direction. The following sections detail the panel's considerations, including cost and timing, for land uses on site.

### Moving Lady Bird Park and Expanding Natural Space

Lady Bird Park sits on the southwest corner of the Expo Idaho site directly adjacent to the major intersection of Chinden Boulevard and Glenwood Street. Given the constraints of the existing and proposed floodplain lines limiting land use to the northeast, this corner of the site is prime for future development. To unlock future value across the entire site, the panel recommends relocating Lady Bird Park adjacent to the Greenbelt along the Boise River, where the park would expand the natural and agricultural heritage

of the site while making room for new multipurpose fields. This recommendation involves expanding open space to 78 acres from Lady Bird Park's current 19 acres, creating a unique destination park with synergistic riverfront access, and unlocking the value of the entire 247-acre space.

The new Lady Bird Park would more than triple the current park size and provide the following:

- About 78 acres of prime open space— 34 acres along the river/Greenbelt and 44 acres of natural habitat on the south side of the existing Expo Idaho facility and replacing the racetrack;
- Replacement of the old stables and the north side of the racetrack with 23 acres of recreation space, including six multipurpose fields, a portion of which could be used in place of the existing midway during the Western Idaho Fair; and
- Additional green space for pedestrians along the front and back sides of the existing Expo Idaho buildings.

The acreages in this scenario assume that the new Lady Bird Park extends to cover the current RV park, maximizing the use of land that is of depreciating value, given the existing and expanding floodplain. Moving



BOISE METRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FLICKR

*The Greenbelt trail runs along the Boise River and connects the Expo Idaho property to the broader Boise region.*

the park also opens the opportunity for future mixed-use development opportunities at a key commercial intersection. Future mixed-use development on the site of the current Lady Bird Park would greatly benefit from adjacency to open space along one of the last undeveloped riverfront sites in Ada County.

**Key costs:** Moving Lady Bird Park was one of the stakeholders' most commonly identified needs and is a critical precursor to the redevelopment of the site for a variety of other uses. Because land for Lady Bird Park was purchased using funds from the Department of the Interior's Land and Water Conservation Fund, changing the park's location requires coordination with the National Park Service, an undertaking



ULI

The RV park in relation to the existing and updated floodplain lines on the northern end of the site.

## RV Park Considerations

The panel did not conclude that the Expo Idaho RV park should definitely be removed. Rather, recognizing the reality of the floodplain expansion and the benefits of relocating Lady Bird Park near the river, the panel's scenario maximizes the amount of open space on the site. The panel recommends a cost/benefit analysis of options for the RV park while plans for moving Lady Bird Park are explored.



EXPO IDAHO

estimated at \$205,000, which includes hiring a project manager to ensure execution, obtaining legal opinions, and permitting fees, in addition to a commercial appraisal. In addition, the panel estimates the redevelopment and expansion of natural space improvements would cost about \$78 million.

**Timing:** The panel recommends the relocation of Lady Bird Park as one of the first redevelopment actions on the site.

**Potential funding sources:** Current revenue allocations; rental fees; impact fees; bonding; serial levy; state, federal, and conservation grants; and donations and endowments. The panel recommends exploring assistance for early redevelopment stages from entities such as the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

## New Recreational Fields

Significant community desire exists for more recreational space in Ada County, and additional recreational fields on the site will help further goals of providing residents with active, high-quality outdoor public space. As a part of Lady Bird Park, the addition of 23 acres of high-quality multipurpose fields would promote new community activity and enable the site's use for competitive, regional tournaments. The recreational fields will replace the retired horse stables and are a use well suited to the floodplain.



ADA COUNTY

Public recreational fields at Expo Idaho.

The suggested turf fields will feature lighting to allow the space to be activated day and night. The space can accommodate up to seven fields. The 365-day-a-year traffic that will come to the site will set the stage for commercial uses such as hotels and retail on other parts of the site, while having optional use of the Expo Idaho facilities.

**Key costs:** Demolishing the old stables, leveling the fields, and installing lighting in the floodplain will cost about \$6 million to \$8 million and require about \$200,000 in annual maintenance. The panel notes that an operational team, consisting of a program manager and facilities manager, may each incur another \$75,000 annually; however, depending on the managing entity, this could be covered by expanding responsibilities of existing roles.





Existing facilities at Expo Idaho.

**Timing:** This redevelopment is suggested as an immediate follow-up to the movement of Lady Bird Park to provide a new location for the fair’s midway and unlock the potential for a request for proposals (RFP) of alternative uses for the rest of the site along Glenwood Street and Chinden Boulevard.

**Potential funding sources:** Current revenue allocations; permit/tournament fees; impact fees; hotel/tourism taxes; bonding; serial levy; state and federal grants; donations and endowments; and naming rights/sponsorship.

### Upgrading the Expo Center

As local stakeholder feedback repeatedly confirmed, the Western Idaho Fair is near and dear to many in the community. However, the use of the Expo facilities beyond fair operations is suboptimal, and the

community is clearly interested in making greater use of these facilities for educational, commercial, and recreational purposes throughout the year.

To meet the desire for increased use, the panel recommends modernizing the Expo facilities and hiring a programming and marketing manager to accommodate and promote more events throughout the year. These changes would include a more flexible arrangement of activity, such as moving the existing midway open space to the north side of the Expo buildings to complement the expanded green space and recreational fields.

As part of a second phase, potential exists to attract new and more diverse events, including athletic tournaments, concerts, and trade shows, which could justify a new

50,000-square-foot multipurpose facility. These resources would reinforce use of the new recreational fields while allowing the annual fair more space to expand. If Ada County decides to build a new multipurpose facility, it should complement the existing Expo Center. This new facility could provide an alternate venue to the Boise Centre and operate in partnership with the Centre itself, expanding the Centre’s operations and increasing the frequency and variety of events.

Maintaining the tradition of the fair on the site provides context for future development, setting the course for additional enriching cultural experiences for Ada County residents. Rather than creating a stand-alone agricultural education center, the panel recommends partnering with one of the

key agricultural organizations and making year-round agricultural programming in the multipurpose Expo buildings a priority of the new programming and marketing manager.

**Key costs:** Short-term renovations of the existing Expo facilities are estimated at \$10 million, with the hiring of a programming and marketing manager estimated at \$75,000 annually. Development of a new 50,000-square-foot multipurpose facility is also estimated at \$10 million to \$12 million.

**Timing:** The renovation of the existing Expo facility and the hiring of the programming and marketing manager are suggested to take place within the next 18 months. The development of a new multipurpose building would best take place after the development of the recreational fields.

**Potential funding sources:** Current revenue allocations; rental fees; parking fees; license fees; hotel/tourism taxes; concessions; bonding; serial levy; and naming rights/sponsorship.

### Mixed-Use Town Center

The capstone for unlocking potential and value on the site is the mixed-use development that will occur at the former Lady Bird Park location at the corner of Glenwood Street and Chinden Boulevard. This location is prime for the future gateway to the Expo Center, recreational fields, Lady Bird Park,



*Santana Row in San José, California, is a 42-acre mixed-use center serving Silicon Valley, providing 2.1 million square feet of uses including retail (shops, restaurants, salons, and a movie theater), a hotel, more than 800 residential units, and office space. It is recognized as a well-designed, walkable development that provides a gathering place for local and regional visitors.*

ALLIE CAULFIELD, FLICKR

and the Greenbelt. The panel identified potential for 83 acres of mixed-use development on the site in addition to the other uses identified by the community.

The mixed-use town center can service a variety of experiential retail, office, residential, hotel, and civic development that creates a live/work/play ecosystem for the site and greater area. Residents and occupants will benefit from year-round walkable cultural and recreational amenities that come from

having both the Expo Center and a mix of uses nearby. This approach maintains ties to the Expo facilities and the area's agricultural roots, while improving quality of life and placemaking opportunities for future generations.

The central location of this mixed-use center in Ada County will increase both daily traffic and traffic in pursuit of major sporting and Expo amenities. This variety

ensures the site is not dormant and consistently attracts the activity required as part of vibrant communities. Including a mixed-use town center improves the overall site as an economic engine for long-term growth in the surrounding area.

**Key costs:** Financing for the mixed-use town center phase could come from multiple sources, and ultimately the strategy should be to leverage public dollars and assets for private capital investment and public enhancements. This can be accomplished by creating a business district or urban renewal agency and using those generated public dollars to pay for needs and gaps in the funding of the project to meet county-desired results as well as structuring purchase or lease agreements to require certain performance benchmarks and/or public enhancements.

**Funding sources:** Leveraging the sale proceeds or ground lease payments to pay down or offset potential bond financing for the public improvements would allow Ada County to minimize capital exposure for the overall project.

**Timing:** The mixed-use town center should be the last phase of development for the entire site. This will allow the amenities in this phase to build value from the operational open-space enhancements and renovated Expo Center.

## Structured Parking

The addition of structured parking on the site will create opportunities to enhance the street-level experience for everyone on the Expo Idaho site. Parking structures will enhance security on the site and allow better management of venues. While the structured parking comes at a cost, it is key to unlocking the utility of future green spaces and ground-level activation. If structured parking is ultimately constructed, it would allow the conversion of current surface parking to other high-quality public space on site.

Building two distinct parking structures will allow the surface parking to be replaced in phases and defer the costs over time as the Expo, stadium, and mixed-use town center expansions take place. The panel estimates that each structure should accommodate 400 spaces.



MIZKIT, SHUTTERSTOCK

**Key costs:** Constructing two structured parking facilities of 400 stalls each is estimated at \$12 million each, for a total of \$24 million.

**Potential funding sources:** Private capital investment (stadium affiliated); parking fees; bonding; and urban renewal agency.

## A Bigger, Better Stadium

Alternatives for the current stadium on site include expanding or renovating the stadium in place or relocating the stadium to another location on site. Both options come with challenges.

The panel recommends increasing the size of the stadium to increase capacity from 3,500 seats to 4,000. Although the expanded capacity can attract larger crowds and potentially drive alternative events to the venue, it is still likely to be activated only 50 to 60 days a year. This enhanced activation and capacity would offer a complementary use on the site, though it is ultimately unlikely to provide success on its own. A new or renovated stadium is a high-risk investment that requires further market analysis. The panel recommends commissioning a market study to understand the economic benefit of a new stadium and any stadium renovations.

The stadium expansion would potentially attract other Major League Baseball franchises to look at the venue as an option for moving a team back to the Treasure Valley and provide additional marketing and sponsorship opportunities. An expansion or renovation would build upon existing community attractions. In both the renovation and relocation options, the lease structure of the stadium should be reviewed to complement the other uses on the site.

A new stadium could act as a beacon of civic pride for the residents of Ada County. The trickle-down benefits of a local sports team can build a sense of community and serve as an economic development asset.

If a new or renovated stadium is not pursued, the existing stadium can contribute to revenue generation for the site by evaluating and modifying the current agreement to include amendments such as the implementation of paid parking and the payment of a proportionate share of property tax. Long term, the existing stadium area creates an opportunity to accommodate different uses if the stadium is demolished.

**Key costs:** The panel estimates the cost for a market analysis of the stadium to be \$25,000. A full remodel or repositioning of the stadium is estimated at \$40 million to \$60 million.

**Potential funding sources:** Private capital investment; sale and/or lease of property; parking fees and concessions; hotel/tourism taxes; urban renewal agency; naming rights/ sponsorship; and revenue sharing.

### New Agricultural Center

The Citizens Advisory Committee and community stakeholders expressed a clear desire to celebrate the agricultural heritage of Ada County on the Expo Idaho site. An agricultural center of about one acre can serve to educate the general public as well as preserve the site's history.

An agricultural center will have minimal revenue potential, therefore requiring strategic funding and operational partnerships with groups such as Future Farmers of America or a local university. If pursued by the county, this project could provide uses complementary to the Expo Center and attract sponsorships and philanthropic opportunities.

Alternatively, Expo Idaho could use the existing and expanded Expo facilities for agricultural programming rather than build a dedicated structure. Either approach will require funding, staff, and dedicated partners to program and manage events cohesively with other events on site.



VALERIE ABENROTH

*Children feed goats at the Western Idaho Fair.*

**Key costs:** The panel anticipates construction of a new agricultural center to be about \$10 million to \$12 million. Funding for an operating manager could be about \$75,000 per year, and ongoing maintenance is estimated to be about \$100,000 annually.

**Potential funding sources:** The funding opportunities for an agricultural center are unique in that this will be an educational space rather than one focused on entertainment, which broadens the funding opportunities. Donations, endowments, and partnerships are likely sources of funding for such a project, which can draw upon Idaho's strong agricultural heritage.

Additional sources of funding could include hotel/tourism taxes; bonding; concessions; state and federal grants; naming rights/ sponsorship (attractive to local agricultural entities); and donations/endowments.

# Summary of Estimated Costs of Potential Land Uses

## Estimated Cost of Citizens Advisory Committee Proposed Land Uses

Use	Project item	Item cost	Estimated total
Moving Lady Bird Park/expanding natural space	Coordination with National Park Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire project manager</li> <li>Legal opinions</li> <li>Permitting</li> </ul>	\$200,000	<b>\$60.2 million to \$80.2 million</b>
	Commercial appraisal	\$5,000	
	Natural space improvements	\$60 million to \$80 million	
Recreational fields	Physical improvements	\$6 million to \$8 million	<b>\$6 million to \$8 million, plus \$350,000 annually</b>
	Operational team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program manager (\$75,000)</li> <li>Facilities manager (\$75,000)</li> </ul>	\$150,000 annually	
	Ongoing maintenance	\$200,000 annually	
Upgraded Expo Center	Program and marketing manager	\$75,000 annually	<b>\$18 million to \$22 million, plus \$75,000 annually</b>
	Modernizing existing structures	\$8 million to \$10 million	
	New multipurpose facility	\$10 million to \$12 million	
Structured parking	Two 400-stall structures	\$12 million each	<b>\$24 million</b>
New agricultural center	Construction	\$10 million to \$12 million	<b>\$10 million to \$12 million, plus \$175,000 annually</b>
	Operating manager	\$75,000 annually	
	Ongoing maintenance	\$100,000 annually	
Stadium	Market analysis	\$25,000	<b>\$40 million to \$60 million+</b>
	Remodel/reposition	\$40 million to \$60 million	
Mixed-use town center	Consultant for RFP	\$100,000	<b>\$175,000 initial costs, up to \$200 million total</b>
	Master plan and concept design	\$75,000	
	Development	TBD	

ULI

## Estimated Cost of Three Development Directions

Direction 1: Agricultural Heritage	
Natural space	\$72 million
Upgrades to Expo Center	\$10 million
Agricultural center	\$10 million
<b>Estimated total</b>	<b>\$90 million to \$100 million</b>

Direction 2: Sports and Recreation	
Natural space	\$72 million
Upgrades to Expo Center	\$10 million
Recreational fields	\$6 million
Stadium	\$50 million
<b>Estimated total</b>	<b>\$135 million to \$150 million</b>

Direction 3: Mixed-Use Town Center	
Natural space	\$72 million
Upgrades to Expo Center	\$10 million
Town center	\$200,000 initial cost, developer cost TBD
<b>Estimated total</b>	<b>\$80 million to \$200 million</b>

ULI

# Possibilities for Expo Idaho: Alternative Site Plan

Ada County has conducted extensive research and solicited public input about the future of the Expo Idaho site. Many commissioned studies and reports, such as the 2007 Colliers report, the 2018 Boise Sports Park market feasibility study, the 2020 Expo Idaho Citizens Advisory Committee report and ongoing public surveys, set the stage to move this project forward.

Although an understanding of the costs and impacts of the individual land uses is useful, the panel recommends that Ada County think of the Expo Idaho site in larger terms. Defining the legacy of Expo Idaho for generations to come should guide this project. In that regard, the county should begin to approach the site in terms of *and* rather than *or*. All proposed uses analyzed in the previous section are feasible and can add value to the site and the community. Providing a range of programmable spaces and amenities that are actively managed will be key to providing the most benefit for the citizens of Ada County.



*The Skyride at Expo Idaho.*

VALERIE ABENROTH

## Guiding Framework

Achieving a project of this magnitude will require coordination and several immediate steps to ensure the long-term success of the endeavor. Here, the panel proposes a

possible organization of land uses for the site and a phasing approach for achieving it.

The panel's recommended approach to organizing and phasing uses on the site is guided by three principles: preserve, celebrate, and connect.

- **Preserve:** Strive to preserve the site's unique open-space resources: Lady Bird Park, public recreation fields, connection and access to the Boise River, and access to the Greenbelt.
- **Celebrate:** Celebrate the community's heritage, the love and appreciation for the Western Idaho Fair, Expo Idaho as a gathering place for diverse communities, and the Boise Hawks as a source of community pride and family entertainment.
- **Connect:** Respond to growth and change with a range of active and complementary uses, conceiving of the whole site as a way to deliver broad public benefit to citizens of a growing Ada County.

## Organization of Uses

All of the community's desired uses for the Expo Idaho site can be successfully accommodated with strategic organization. The panel's approach incorporates all potential key uses as amplified by the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Key elements to the panel's approach include making the Expo Center, preserved and enhanced with a potential new agricultural center, a central element. This



- 1 Parking
- 2 Lady Bird Park (Open Space #1)
- 3 Existing Stadium
- 4 Parking (interim)
- 5 Parking Deck
- 6 Alternative Stadium
- 7 Gateway
- 8 Mixed-Use Town Center
- 9 Midway Linear Park
- 10 Natural Turf Fields (Open Space #2)
- 11 Expo
- 12 Agricultural Center
- 13 New Green Spine
- 14 Nature Center
- 15 Lake
- 16 Nature Preserve & Habitat (Open Space #3)

A "big idea" plan for the potential organization of uses on the site.



- 11 Expo
- 12 Agricultural Center

The expanded Expo Center and new agricultural center.

approach relocates the Western Idaho Fair site to the natural turf fields adjacent to the Expo Center. In total, this modified Expo area would encompass 1.2 million square feet, or 27 acres.

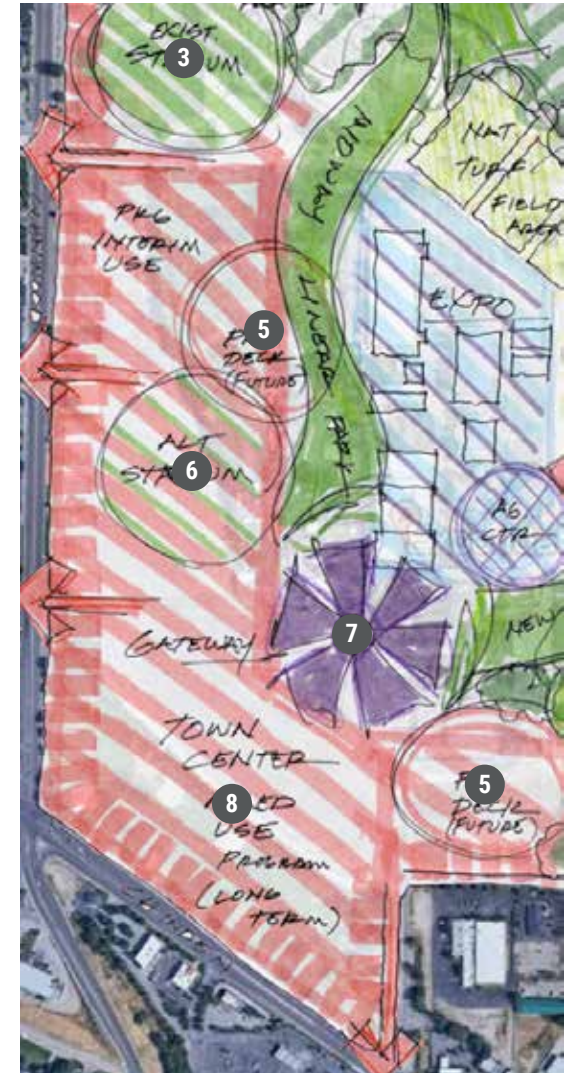
The panel's approach moves Lady Bird Park to the northern edge of the site and expands recreational uses into three key areas of over 100 acres of public open space connected by the Greenbelt and new parks.

- **Area 1:** Existing adjacent riparian area with Greenbelt access and a new Midway Linear Park connecting Lady Bird Park to the Town Center comprising 1.5 million square feet, or 34 acres, estimating \$12 per square foot for improvement costs.

- **Area 2:** Natural turf fields next to the Expo Center comprising 1 million square feet, or 23 acres, estimating \$6 per square foot for costs, excluding lighting.
- **Area 3:** New nature preserve and Nature Center for outdoor education with wetlands and grassland habitat replacing the former horse racing track and stables, with a new Green Spine Park connecting the Greenbelt to the Town Center, comprising 1.9 square feet, or 44 acres, estimating \$25 per square foot for improvement costs.

Future decision-making about the stadium will be informed by current and detailed market studies, but the panel members agreed that a stadium can be successful on the site either in its current location or moved south as part of the town center development. The panel envisions that enhancing the existing stadium would entail using 600,000 square feet, or 14 acres, of the site.

The town center could be developed in the area that is currently surface parking, on the southern portion of the site. The panel estimates commercial uses at 3.6 million square feet, or 83 acres. The purple asterisk in the plan represents a gateway district of 15 to 20 acres, to serve as a core destination for retail, hotel, dining, entertainment, and event ticketing. This location provides



- 3 Existing Stadium
- 7 Gateway
- 5 Parking Deck
- 8 Mixed-Use Town Center
- 6 Alternative Stadium

The town center area with surface parking, a potentially relocated stadium, and a gateway district.



access to the fair, parks, and the Expo Center and serves as the hub of commercial activity with views of the fair, the river, and downtown Boise.

The recommended gateway district enables additional entertainment that ties to the Expo Center and the fair as well as the proposed Agricultural Center. A local food hall celebrating Idaho would be an appropriate use in this location. The gateway district is tied directly to the two new linear parks that act as green spines, guiding visitors to Lady Bird Park and the natural areas.

## Phasing Recommendations for Maximizing Uses on Site

Ada County can redevelop Expo Idaho using a long-term road map, which can extend forward from 10 to 35 or more years, depending on whether phases are approached sequentially or simultaneously, and how partners are engaged.

The following sections discuss key considerations in the decision-making sequence as proposed by the panel.

### Phase 1: Master Plan and Market Study

**In the first six to 12 months:** To set the stage for a successful legacy for the Expo Idaho site, the panel recommends taking key planning steps and making preparatory investments to ensure the project's longevity.

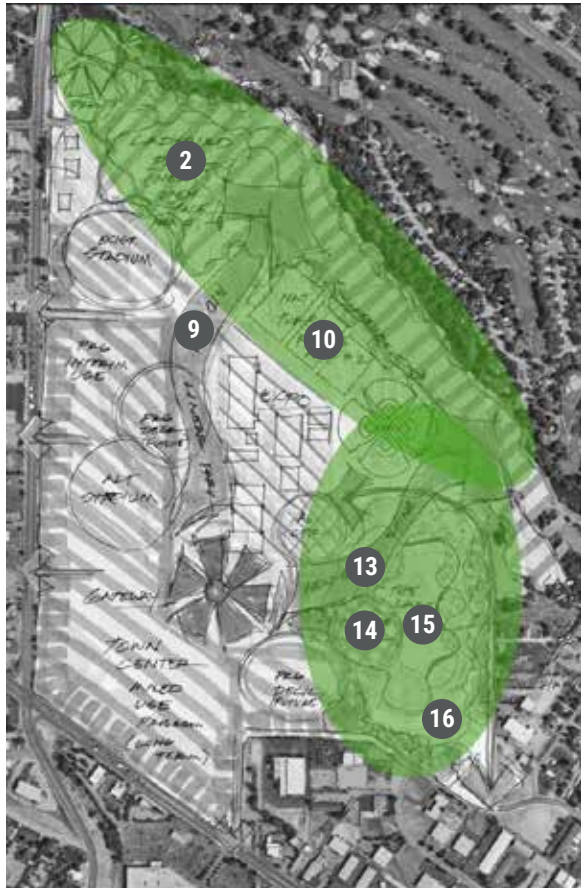
- Conduct market studies in preparation for site master planning. This preliminary site master plan should leave flexibility regarding specific uses this early in the process.
- Establish governance for a 10- to 35-year (or more) project, including identifying a project champion who will advocate tirelessly for this project regardless of how elected representation changes.
- Articulate high-level goals and objectives to shape the redevelopment process moving forward.
- Conduct public communication around the process (Expo Idaho and the Western Idaho Fair are safe, sports fields are coming, this is a multigenerational project that will take 10 to 35 years to complete).
- Make decisions regarding the new proposed floodplain.
- Establish long-term funding sources for subsequent phases (impact fees, tax increment financing, etc.).

These steps are critical for any development on the site. The panel estimates these activities to cost roughly \$250,000.

### Phase 2a: Move Lady Bird Park

**One to three years:** The immediate next step following initial planning decisions should be to focus on moving Lady Bird Park and making green-space improvements. Moving Lady Bird Park is the key-stone project that will unlock the value and potential of the rest of the site. This step also provides immediate public benefit for the community.

- Respond to any floodplain expansion, and finalize the floodplain line update.
- Initiate the process to move Lady Bird Park.
  - Demolish stables and other dilapidated structures, and assess environmental conditions.
  - Provide new landscaping with trees and native shrubs.
  - Construct new park facilities.
  - Enhance Greenbelt access.
  - Construct playfields with necessary fair infrastructure.
- Build the Nature Center and nature preserve, and the Green Spine Park.



- 2 Lady Bird Park (Open Space #1)
- 9 Midway Linear Park
- 10 Natural Turf Fields (Open Space #2)
- 13 New Green Spine
- 14 Nature Center
- 15 Lake
- 16 Nature Preserve & Habitat (Open Space #3)

*Additional and renovated green spaces on the site.*



- 11 Expo
- 12 Agricultural Center

*Expo Idaho facilities and Agricultural Center areas to upgrade.*

- In the last year of this phase, study the feasibility and financial impacts of relocating the RV park on or off this site.
- Initiate the site master planning process. This process does not need to follow the format of a traditional site-specific master plan. Instead, it could be a master plan with a strategy implementation focus.

The timing for this phase depends in part on the level of coordination with the National Park Service and other agencies involved in the approval process for moving Lady Bird Park, as well as determining the floodplain update. Determining funding sources and developing the new park will add to the timeline as well.

The panel estimates this phase will cost about \$78 million.

### Phase 2b: Upgrade Expo Idaho Facilities

**One to three years:** In the same time frame as relocating Lady Bird Park, the panel recommends beginning upgrades to the Expo Center facilities.

- Invest in operational enhancements to optimize use of the site. This step could begin before Phase 2.
  - Additional marketing resources and staff.

- Placemaking beachhead activities: bring people to the site frequently to connect as a community and create a sense of place. This builds a prototype of the kind of uses that people will want to see at the site. Permanent structures or events can build on these uses in the future.

- Semi-permanent food truck area.
- Recurring events (farmers market, festivals, etc.).

- Improve existing Expo facilities, access, and site circulation.
  - Modernizing the current building, estimated cost \$10 million; or
  - Expanding facilities from 75,000 square feet to about 125,000 square feet.
- Develop the new Agricultural Center (or plan to use Expo Idaho facilities for agricultural activities).

This phase is estimated to cost about \$20 million.

### Phase 3: Issue and Award RFP

**One year:** Following the green space and Expo Idaho improvements, planning for the commercial uses on the site can begin.

- Finalize the site master plan. This step is crucial to ensuring that any RFP produces the desired results. Decide whether to relocate the baseball stadium or improve it in place.

- Issue and award an RFP for development and operating partnerships. Clearly define what is being asked of developers. The RFP should be structured to encourage responses from many qualified parties to ensure choice.

This phase is estimated to cost \$175,000.

### Phase 4: Major Capital Improvements

**Eighteen to 24 months:** To begin the commercial uses phase, the panel recommends focusing on structured parking and entertainment to increase activation and use of the area as quickly as possible.

- Construct structured parking facilities.
- Improve or relocate the stadium.
  - Improving the stadium in place is the most cost-effective option.
  - Relocating the stadium has the potential for additional community benefit as part of a larger town center development.

This phase is estimated to cost \$74 million.



- 3 Existing Stadium
- 5 Parking Deck
- 6 Alternative Stadium

*Locations for a stadium on the site and suggested structured parking locations.*



- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 Existing Stadium    | 7 Gateway               |
| 4 Parking (interim)   | 8 Mixed-Use Town Center |
| 5 Parking Deck        | 9 Midway Linear Park    |
| 6 Alternative Stadium |                         |

*The gateway district and proposed mixed uses on the site.*

## Phase 5: Round Out Mixed Uses

**Two to five years:** The final phase of development should include completion of the mixed-use town center components.

- Complete additional public uses, including potential hotel, restaurant, retail, office, and housing. Consider including right-of-way modifications along Glenwood Street in the RFP for commercial development to provide for adequate turn lands and signalization. Traffic along Glenwood and Chinden Boulevard is intense, but entry into the site should be improved to adequately support the development.
- Complete the Midway Linear Park and connect to Lady Bird Park.

The exact cost of this phase cannot yet be determined, considering the scale of development involved and determining factors in previous phases.

## Funding the Plan

The panel estimates that the total cost to the county of this phased approach is \$172.3 million. The many different uses across the site create an opportunity for engaging diverse funding partners, which is a true asset for this redevelopment approach.

Upon completing the final site master plan, the county will be able to identify specific projects or opportunities within the plan that can be matched with distinct funding sources.

It is essential that the county leverage public funds to maximize private investment in the site to meet the desired objectives. This may include leveraging taxing districts, urban renewal, and development enhancements for private capital investment. If there are mechanisms or value that create public dollars for investment, leverage those with private investment to make the public dollars go further and create partnerships for greater project success. If the county has made property available for commercial development, include language in the purchase or sale agreements that requires development performance benchmarks and public enhancements beyond typical public improvements.

Entitled funds and resources may be available for collection, such as licensing, user, or impact fees. If these opportunities exist, then Expo Idaho should be taking advantage of these options. Specific examples include collecting business license fees from each vendor in the Expo Center in addition to the event promoter, or having commercial uses on county property pay property tax and rental fees for use of recreation fields for commercial competitive events.

Mechanisms also exist to creatively leverage revenue through partnerships. These could include naming rights for the Expo Center, Agricultural Center, and recreation fields; leasing of property for commercial uses and sharing revenue from commercial profits, parking fees, and ticket sales; or creating a bond and passing through the bond repayment cost to other users.

Functioning as an enterprise fund (a branch of Ada County, but not a recipient of county funds), Expo Idaho has succeeded in maintaining its property with limited resources. However, the site's financial independence has led to isolation, in the sense that Expo Idaho is a customer of multiple agencies (for example, water and sewer) but not a partner. Opportunities therefore exist to build mutually beneficial partnerships between Expo Idaho and various government agencies. These partnerships will be critical to the future success, timeline, and budget of any redevelopment effort.

Although partnering with multiple agencies can make the redevelopment process more complex, preexisting partnerships can help mediate this risk. The panel feels strongly that if Expo Idaho is unable to form more expansive partnerships with other agencies, any redevelopment process will be prolonged.

## Funding Sources

Possible sources of funding for the plan could include the following:

- User and impact fees;
- Bonding;
- Tournament fees;
- State and federal grants;
- Naming rights/sponsorship;
- Rental, license, and parking fees;
- Concessions;
- Hotel/tourism taxes;
- Private capital investment;
- Urban renewal agency;
- Donations and endowments;
- Sale and/or lease of property;
- Revenue sharing;
- Sales Tax Anticipation Revenue (STAR);
- Improvement district; and
- Development exchange/enhancement.

Several key resources to support the first steps of the redevelopment process could be available at little to no cost. For example, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality offers the Brownfields Assessment Program through which eligible applicants may receive a free site assessment to evaluate contaminant risk and any cleanup costs. This program could be applicable to the redevelopment of several sections of Expo Idaho. The panel recommends initiating a conversation with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and exploring this option during the first stage of moving Lady Bird Park.

*Source: Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.*

## Project Governance and Action Steps

To ensure that Expo Idaho can achieve its potential, celebrate the Western Idaho Fair, and connect Ada County, the site needs a governance structure that positions it for success.

The Ada County Board of Commissioners is the entity in charge of the redevelopment process for Expo Idaho and all county property. Because of election cycles, the current commissioners will not be in office to see significant milestones or completion of site improvements. Today's board has the unique opportunity to launch this redevelopment process by establishing a mechanism through which local champions can shape long-term decisions for the site and "election-proof" the project. These champions should be the right players with the necessary skills, who have expertise analyzing economic demands and dealing with the political forces at play. The panel recommends creating a separate development committee with the authority to lead the redevelopment of the site, similar to the pre-1989 Fair Board that oversaw fair operations and managed the property.



*Activities at the Western Idaho Fair at Expo Idaho.*

The panel recognizes that under current Idaho law the possibilities for the Board of Commissioners to delegate its authority over county property to other entities are limited. The following recommendations are intended to serve as starting points for further exploration.

## Authorizing an Operating Entity

The Board of Commissioners brought together the Expo Idaho Citizens Advisory Committee for the express purpose of providing advice on the revitalization and potential development of the Expo Idaho property. Although the Citizens Advisory Committee is no longer in existence, having fulfilled its advisory role to the board, the panel recommends formalizing such a group and granting a similar committee authority to oversee the development of the site, understanding that options for such authority may be limited under current Idaho law.

The Citizens Advisory Committee formed to provide input on development directions for the site included representatives from each of the six cities that form Ada County, members appointed by each of the county commissioners, and representation from homeowners; the environmental, arts and culture, sports and recreation, and agricultural communities; and individuals with expertise in financial analysis, urban planning, and floodplain management. This group of individuals demonstrated a collective skill set and representation appropriate to guide the revitalization and development of Expo Idaho, and the panel recommends similarly inclusive representation on a future committee, in addition to representation from the community at large.

Following are some exemplary models for consideration.

### Alternative Model: Urban Renewal Agency

The Ada County Board of Commissioners may wish to consider alternative project governance structures. One mixed-governance model that is more representative of government is an urban renewal agency expressly for Ada County and Expo Idaho. For example, neighboring Boise has a successful urban renewal agency model

from which to seek guidance in Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC).

As a redevelopment agency, CCDC focuses its activities in six urban renewal districts in central and outer Boise, and its projects touch economic development, infrastructure, mobility, and placemaking. CCDC is run by a board of commissioners, selected by the mayor of Boise and confirmed by the City Council. Commissioners serve five-year terms. The CCDC board works with a large team of agency staff.

**CCDC** CAPITAL CITY DEVELOPMENT CORP

**VISION** HELP THE BOISE COMMUNITY THRIVE IN A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY WHERE AN EXCEPTIONAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND EXCELLENT BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ARE IN PERFECT BALANCE.

Boise's Redevelopment Agency, Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC), catalyzes investment in the city through its own projects and public/private partnerships. CCDC focuses its work on economic development, infrastructure, place making, and mobility in four redevelopment districts. The Agency works hand-in-hand with local partner organizations and companies to redevelop underutilized properties and improve public places.

**CCDC STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2018**  
(1) Safe and Secure Community; (2) Healthy Community; (3) Connected Community; (4) Environmentally Sustainable Community; (5) Strong, Diverse Local Economy; (6) Creative and Engaged Culture; (7) Innovative and High-Performing Organization.

**FIVE KEY STRATEGIES**

- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
Cultivate commerce and grow resilient, diversified, and prosperous local economies.
- INFRASTRUCTURE**  
Improve public infrastructure to attract new investment and encourage best use of property.
- MOBILITY**  
Expand mobility choices that include parking and multiple transit modes to enable universally accessible urban districts.
- PLACE MAKING**  
Develop public spaces and energized environments where a blend of cultures and concentrated mix of uses create a valued sense of place.
- SPECIAL PROJECTS**  
Invest in projects that respond to emerging revitalization opportunities including public amenities, historic preservation, and support of local arts and culture.

CAPITAL CITY DEVELOPMENT

More on CCDC at [ccdchoise.com](http://ccdchoise.com).

Under the provisions of the Idaho State Code, an urban renewal agency could be authorized for the redevelopment of the Expo Idaho site. The Idaho State Code authorizes redevelopment activities in deteriorated areas. As the largest underused urban site in Ada County, Expo Idaho may qualify for a county-run redevelopment agency of its own. Representatives of the renewal agency would be appointed by the Ada County Board of Commissioners. The panel is aware that examples of urban renewal districts at the county level are rare or even unprecedented but believes that this is an option to explore with appropriate legal counsel.

### **Alternative Model: Operating Committee**

The panel recommends that Ada County set up an entity with operational capacity and authority to lead the redevelopment of the site. In order to act on the site's opportunities in a meaningful way, Ada County may wish to reconsider the current governance structure of the Expo Idaho Advisory Board. Pending legal review, this could involve reinstating the previous Citizens Advisory Committee as an authorizing committee similar to the original independent Fair Board of pre-1989. An authorizing or operating committee model with express authority can

### **Potential Alternative Model: Joint Powers Authority**

Another effective model is a joint powers authority, typically seen in areas requiring the coordination of large-scale or regional transportation, such as metropolitan transportation authority districts.

A joint powers authority requires a representative for each jurisdiction with a clear stake in the development of the site. For Expo Idaho, this would include a representative from each of the county commissioners and from each of the six municipalities in Ada County.

The Lewiston–Nez Perce County Airport is a regional airport co-owned by the city of Lewiston, Idaho, and Nez Perce County. The Lewiston–Nez Perce County Airport Authority and a governing board of commissioners run the airport's operations and property. The governing board consists of members appointed by the city of Lewiston, others by Nez Perce County, and an additional member selected by the full body of appointed representatives.

The panel recognizes that while in the case of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Airport the joint powers authority model is successful, this model may not be currently applicable or feasible for Ada County under existing law. The panel encourages the board to further investigate this model or similar creative partnerships for future applicability to this site.





provide the consistency necessary to implement a stable long-term vision for the site's revitalization and development timeline.

The current Expo Idaho Advisory Board is composed of seven volunteer members, appointed by the Board of Commissioners for three-year terms. The Expo Idaho Advisory Board advises the Board of Commissioners and the Expo Idaho director regarding the operation and administration of the fair and the use of the Expo Idaho facilities and grounds when the fair is not in session, and acts as liaison between the director, Board of Commissioners, and the community. While considering a governance model for the entire Expo Idaho site, the panel encourages the Ada County Board of Commissioners to define how the Expo Idaho Advisory Board should interact with this new body.

### **Alternative Model: Operationalizing the County**

If the Ada County Board of Commissioners retains all authority over the site, the panel recommends the board consider how best to retain and take advantage of Expo Idaho's enterprise designation. The panel suggests the Expo Idaho organization, currently established as an enterprise fund, focus on the management of the Expo building and the Western Idaho Fair. As the redevelopment

of the site progresses, county departments could be strategically brought in to support different phases. For example, the Ada County Parks and Waterways department would be heavily involved in the relocation and redevelopment of Lady Bird Park on Expo Idaho grounds, and Ada County Development Services could take the lead during the mixed-use town center phase.

This model retains Expo Idaho under the authority of the Ada County Board of Commissioners but brings to bear all the county resources necessary to truly revitalize the site. This will require an approach to the project that considers the Expo Idaho site as one of many of the portfolio of assets in Ada County. This approach will signal that the county is focusing on how best to reach the most people and connect the most communities through the site's revitalization.

### **Steps for the Next 18 Months**

Regardless of the development path pursued by the Ada County Board of Commissioners, several decisions need to be made about Expo Idaho in the next few years to ensure the site's long-term success. In the next 18 months, the panel recommends the Ada County Board of Commissioners take the following steps to lay the groundwork for successful future development.

### **Communicate to the Public: Acknowledge Consensus to Build Support**

Community stakeholders express clear concern about the future of the site. Many in the community continue to mourn the loss of horse racing at Expo Idaho and fear the loss of the Western Idaho Fair, as well.

Given the high level of community concern around such issues, the panel recommends the board communicate early and often the intentions for the fair and Expo Idaho. Delivering a clear message that the fair and Expo Idaho are safe and that the heritage of those resources will be celebrated is paramount to gathering public support for any redevelopment plan.

With current growth and development in Ada County, the community faces a decline in open space within urban areas. Because of the floodplain line on the Expo Idaho site, much of this area likely will be best developed as green and recreational space. This aligns with the community's desire for such spaces in Ada County. The board can bolster public support for changes to the site by communicating that redevelopment plans will increase public green space and amenities.

## **Actively Manage the Floodplain Update**

Working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to manage the floodplain line update on the Expo Idaho site is a tactical step that will unlock the long-term potential of the property. Arm project staff with key consultants who are knowledgeable about floodplain management. The outcome of the floodplain update will materially impact the future uses, development, and value of the site. Floodplain update management is the first decisive step to expand public green space and move Lady Bird Park.

## **Establish Long-Term Funding Sources**

The panel has laid out phases for the redevelopment of Expo Idaho so that the county can phase the project in ways that maximize the benefit of partnering with the private sector. However, establishing these funding sources for later phases of development on the site will take time. Beginning this process in the next 18 months is an important step toward success for the project.

## **Invest in Operations**

When planning for the future of the site, it will be important to maximize the activity and productivity of uses. If the public sees vacant parking lots, this will further the perception that the site is underused. The panel encourages the county to think like a factory: down time at the site is the enemy of public benefit. The panel recommends prioritizing investment in specialty skills to manage site activation and operations. This is especially important with a site of this size with such diverse proposed uses, needs, and requirements.

## Conclusion

The panel recognizes that this moment is a rare opportunity for Ada County and Expo Idaho. The successful redevelopment of Expo Idaho offers a once-in-a-generation chance to build a legacy for the community. To redevelop the site in a manner that serves the Expo Idaho mission year-round, the panel recommends the Board of Commissioners implement a thoughtful, phased plan and corresponding governance structure. These steps will ensure that Expo Idaho can thrive for future generations of Idahoans.

A project of this scale necessitates that Ada County think big. The redevelopment of the Expo Idaho site is a project that has great potential to serve as a gathering place and connect people across diverse interests for many years to come. Decisions do not have to be limited to a particular development direction—many uses are possible. Not all decisions should be made in the near term, but some short-term tactical decisions are necessary.

The panel's principles to preserve, celebrate, and connect should serve as guidance to Ada County. Future uses on the site can celebrate local history and culture and connect diverse communities, but only with decisive first steps today.



*Boise Music Festival at Expo Idaho.*

# Summary Table

Recommended Project Phasing	PHASE 1		PHASE 2a		PHASE 2b	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
	SIMULTANEOUS		SIMULTANEOUS					
<b>Scope</b>	Conduct site master planning and market studies; establish long-term governance for project duration; communicate with public about process (Expo and Fair are safe, recreational fields are coming, this is a multigenerational project that will take 10–35+ years to complete); make decisions regarding floodplain; establish long-term funding sources for subsequent phases (impact fees, TIF, etc.); articulate high-level goals and objectives to shape the redevelopment process moving forward		Floodplain expansion implementation, if finalized; move Lady Bird Park, demolish stables and horse track, assess environmental conditions and build recreational fields; in last year of this phase, study feasibility of relocating RV park on or off this site, including financial impact		Improve Expo facilities, access, and site circulation; invest in operational enhancements such as additional marketing resources for Expo Center and potential placemaking beachhead activities, such as a semi-permanent food truck area and recurring events (farmers market, etc.)	Finalize site master plan; issue and award RFP for development and operating partnerships	Move and/or improve stadium; construct structured parking facilities	Complete additional public uses, including potentially hotel, restaurant, retail, office, and housing
<b>TIMING</b>	6–12 MONTHS		1–3 YEARS			1 YEAR	18–24 MONTHS	2–5 YEARS
<b>ESTIMATED COSTS</b>	\$250,000 to \$500,000		\$60 million to \$80 million		\$5 million to \$25 million	\$150,000 to \$400,000	\$50 million to \$75 million	\$40 million to \$100 million
<b>OUTCOME / RESULT</b>	Stakeholder unity		Construction jobs			Preserve generational opportunity	Jobs	Jobs
	Confidence in leadership		Playing fields—public win		Improve regional competitiveness	Stakeholder buy-in	Tax revenue	Tax revenue
	Reasonable expectations		Stables gone—liability risk mitigated		Attract larger shows	Clear road map for development	Better stadium	Nationally recognized destination
	Directional master plan		Clarity around RV park		Events and program revenue		Attract minor league affiliation	Potential ground lease revenue
	Secure funding for large public project						Open up more developable land	More revenue streams
	“Election-proof” project		Opens “keystone” to any future site improvements				Parking revenue	

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# About the Panel

## Sarah Sieloff

Panel Chair

Bellingham, Washington

Sieloff is a senior planner at Maul Foster Alongi, an interdisciplinary firm providing planning and development, environmental, engineering, and communications services throughout the Pacific Northwest. Her work focuses on helping public- and private-sector clients initiate and advance land reuse and local economic development projects.

Before joining Maul Foster Alongi, Sieloff was a Council on Foreign Relations–Hitachi Fellow and studied municipal responses to population decline in Japan. From 2015 to 2020, she served as the executive director of the Center for Creative Land Recycling, the premier land reuse nonprofit in the United States. She has served on or chaired ULI Advisory Services panels in South Carolina, Colorado, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C.

## David Armitage

Seattle, Washington

Armitage has focused his development activities on creating social value through transformative and catalytic development projects. Synthesizing skills in construction and project management, equity and debt finance (including tax credit affordable housing, tax-exempt bond finance, and other creative public/private partnership financing structures), and creative program and design leadership, he has directly led over \$500 million in developments and overseen an additional \$2 billion as a senior investment and asset manager.

His development projects have included public/private partnerships designed to catalyze urban renewal and economic development (Burien Town Square, Burien, Washington), tech-enabled “agri-hoods” designed around regenerative principles of circular economy (Regen Villages, Amsterdam, Netherlands), transit-oriented developments (Wilshire Vermont Station, University Gateway, Los Angeles, Washington), and large-scale master-planned communities designed to increase community

interaction and walkability on the neighborhood scale (Riverpark, Oxnard, California).

Important to his process is understanding geographical and social history, engaging stakeholders in developing community, collaborating with leading architects and designers to create highly functional and beautiful structures, and applying the creative use of various financing mechanisms to unlock the greatest potential of the land and communities he serves.

In addition to his development work, Armitage directs Portfolio Management and Asset Management at Heartland, including managing roughly 2 million square feet of commercial space, 340 units/doors of multifamily developments, and a recurring annual investment program for Laird Norton Properties.

## Cielo Castro

Pomona, California

Castro is chief of staff at Fairplex, a nonprofit, 501(c)(5) community benefit organization that leads a 487-acre campus proudly

located in the city of Pomona. Over the past four years, she has helped lead the organization through a complete reimagining of its role as a public/private partnership dedicated to community service. Her community-focused vision for Fairplex became more relevant than ever when COVID-19 hit the region in March 2020. Castro simultaneously facilitated multiple partnerships, from drive-through food pantries and COVID testing to vaccine distribution, which led to Fairplex playing a critical role in the COVID-19 response in the Inland Empire and San Gabriel Valley.

More recently, she brokered an agreement between Fairplex and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that led to Fairplex serving as an Emergency Intake Site for unaccompanied children. She continues to facilitate community engagement, relief, and advocacy efforts related to the site.

She came to Fairplex after serving as transparency officer for the City of Los Angeles Office of City Administrative Officer, acting as executive liaison with external stakeholders and providing oversight support for the city's \$8 billion budget. Castro was previously deputy to Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, where she was responsible for discretionary grantmaking; staff hiring, recruitment, and development; and policy issues, including immigration, housing, and community development.

Castro served the Obama administration as special assistant at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C., where she advised the assistant secretary of community planning and development on policy and political matters regarding a \$50 billion grant portfolio and over 1,200 grantees. Previously, she had seven years of experience working with elected officials as director of constituency services with the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, and in outreach roles with the National League of Cities.

Committed to public service, Castro currently serves as chair of the board of commissioners for the Housing Authority of the city of Los Angeles, appointed by Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2017, and previously served as a commissioner to the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pension board. She was a 2007 National Hispana Leadership Institute Executive Program fellow. A Southern California native, she received a BS in business administration from Boston University and an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School.

### **Nick Duerkson** Sandy, Utah

Duerkson has over 30 years in the economic development, community development, and redevelopment profession. He has had the

opportunity to create and direct a variety of programs and projects in the development field and specializes in economic development, redevelopment, land development, community development, land use planning, local, state, and federal programs, and municipal administration.

### **Peter McEneaney** New York, New York

As vice president of Thor Equities based in New York City, McEneaney is responsible for overseeing all aspects of planning, development, and construction on infrastructure, retail, commercial, residential, and mixed-use projects spread across more than 20 properties in New York, Miami, and Chicago. His project experience includes acquisition and implementation of ground-up construction and repositioning of existing assets.

He manages and assembles design and construction consultants to achieve project goals across the portfolio, actively managing and directly responsible for teams of up to 15 consultants. His focus is on developing a strategy for acquisitions through deep market understanding and analysis, overseeing design and implementation teams, and managing sales/leasing and operational teams to create value for investors. He is accountable for creating and managing project budgets and responsible for presenting updates to management monthly as well

as in charge of communication between internal team project groups.

McEneaney is a graduate of New York University's Schack Institute of Real Estate Master of Science in Real Estate Finance and University of Rochester bachelor of arts in political science minoring in economics and art history/architecture. He is a member of the Association for a Better New York and the Urban Land Institute.

### **Stacey Mosely** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mosley is the founder and chief executive officer of Stepwise Analytics and the director of research at Brandywine Realty Trust. She has spent her career at the intersection of data and real estate, developing data-driven solutions to overcome issues of disinvestment and blight.

After studying a mix of mechanical and industrial engineering at Northwestern University, Mosely took her interest in products and process first to the Philadelphia-based startup Ticketleap. She then spent five years in city government working on both the Vacant Property Strategy and Open Data Initiative before starting her own real estate analytics company, Stepwise Analytics. She now works at

Brandywine Realty Trust, analyzing and modernizing internal operations, identifying investment opportunities, as well as keeping up with market trends.

### **Stephanie Pankiewicz** Alexandria, Virginia

Pankiewicz is a partner and landscape architect at Land Design in Alexandria, Virginia. She directs many of the firm's large-scale master planning projects, including long-range master planning to urban design solutions for some of the nation's leading developers. As a creative design leader, she applies her knowledge by offering innovative approaches including state-of-the-art design tools to engage diverse stakeholders in building consensus and understanding.

She enjoys working at a variety of scales throughout the design process and remains uniquely involved in all stages of a project. Her experience includes urban design, park planning and design, community master plans, site planning, design guidelines and streetscapes, with an emphasis on using green infrastructure techniques as storm water harvesting, roof gardens, stream restoration, native plants, and natural treatment systems for bio-retention.

### **Nicolia Robinson** Atlanta, Georgia

Robinson joined Cooper Carry in 2000 and was named a senior associate in 2012 and associate principal in 2021. She brings to the firm a diverse background in architecture and urban planning and works in both the Transit + TOD and Mixed-Use Studios. As an architecturally trained planner, her background includes transit, mixed-use, downtown, waterfront, and neighborhood master plans for both public- and private-sector clients. Robinson has successfully managed community and downtown revitalization projects to reflect her belief that connective design must encompass not only a physical perspective, but a social and economic one as well.

She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Florida and later graduated from the University at Buffalo in New York with a dual master of architecture and urban planning. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, the Georgia Planning Association, and the Urban Land Institute.



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