

Mayor Tammy's 2018 State of the City Speech

‘A Rising Star’

Introduction Video – [How to Say and Spell Mayor Tammy's Last Name](#)

Thank you! I'm so excited to talk about our Rising Star, Meridian.

A 'rising star' theme might surprise some of you; it did my husband. He said, 'That's old news. People would already say Meridian is a star with the accolades it's received.' It's true that Meridian once again received recognition for 'best places' and 'safest cities' by publications like Money Magazine, USA Today and WalletHub.

It's easy to sometimes forget how good we have it! This past year, we had a North American business magazine reach out to us to feature Meridian. The reporter, calling from back east, paused during our interview. He told me the information and statistics he had on Meridian seemed unreal. The reporter titled his article "A Rising Star." That's perfect! We live, work and raise our families in an unbelievable place. And there is even more on the horizon...

Video – [Meridian: A Rising Star](#)

Meridian - a rising star indeed! This was evident in the Citizen Survey results received early last summer. Of those surveyed, 93% of residents indicated the City exceeds expectations as a place to raise a family, 92% rated Meridian as an excellent place to live, with 91% saying they have an "overall feeling of safety".

To say we were pleased is an understatement! In the three years since we last surveyed our citizens, we improved results in 64 of the 84 areas. The complete report is on our website.

Last summer, we heard from a Meridian resident thanking the Mayor and City Council for guiding Meridian as a wonderful place to work and live. She wrote about 'caring neighbors' – her neighbors - citing several examples such as residents pulling together by donating time and materials to build a ramp for a father that broke his back. The acts of kindness during last winter's snow are abundant.

Our rising stars are our neighbors who are working together to provide the foundation for a community that cares. Our many business partners are rising stars. They are generous and engaged - like our State of the City sponsors who fund youth scholarships and other events that bring us together. Our rising stars are our employees, our Senior Leadership Team, and our City Council members who are focused on the needs of our citizens in 'The Meridian Way,' which is to provide CARE in a timely, friendly, professional and solution-oriented manner.

We have a few new faces on our Leadership Team. We welcomed Dale Bolthouse as Public Works Director and Cameron Arial as Community Development Director. Our newest City Council member, Treg Bernt, filled the seat of Keith Bird who retired after serving 20 years.

As the adage goes, you can only manage what you measure. We continue to make steady progress in our five strategic focus areas: Strategic Growth, Economic Vibrancy, Responsive Government, Safe Healthy and Secure, and Arts, Culture and Recreation.

Each year I share information in each of these areas - let us begin.

Strategic Focus Area #1: Strategic Growth.

Strategic growth requires good planning – we master plan everything from city utilities to land use, parks and open space to our comprehensive financial plan. This planning is critical to managing land development and maintaining levels of city services. The challenge, inherent to our center of the valley location, is accommodating the Valley's vehicles, including our own, and a school district that covers 385 square miles and serves five cities and parts of two counties.

Our city survey cited growth, roads and schools as the top three areas on which to focus. Based on conversations throughout my listening tours, the biggest issue with growth is the impact on our schools and roads. The roads are managed by Ada County Highway District (ACHD) and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD); schools are managed by West Ada School District. We plan and collaborate at staff and administrative levels. To further improve this coordination, our City Council recognizes their role and the need to meet with the elected officials of ACHD and West Ada. We will be organizing these meetings as there is plenty to talk about.

Next month, our voters will be asked to weigh in on two ballot measures pertaining to schools: one to address overcrowding and the other regarding the size of classes. Keep in mind, the state of Idaho is constitutionally mandated to provide adequate funding for operations and, I believe, buildings. Yet, they don't provide enough. That is why we have a bond for school buildings and a levy for operations on the ballot. Idaho, please invest in your children! I have always supported our kids and their futures and will do so again on March 13th. Moving forward, we've got to fix this. Property taxes shouldn't have to fill the gaps. Therefore, I will continue to advocate with our State leaders to step up their 'mandated' funding to the levels needed.

In transportation, ACHD wrapped up the two-mile widening of Ustick from Locust Grove to Linder. What a great improvement! The next project in the area will widen Linder from Ustick north to Chinden. The design is underway with construction next year.

We have serious needs on Chinden/SH 20-26. This regional roadway is managed by the State's ITD. They have scheduled improvements but not until 2021, starting with a one-mile segment. Developers have been working towards a 'private/public' solution to widen Chinden for six miles from Eagle to McDermott before 2021. Later this spring, City Council will determine if these proposed developments with this local solution will fit their vision for the Chinden corridor.

On the top of mind for many in our community is where development happens and how it will look. Whether one views growth as good or not, we all agree it must be well-planned.

We're beginning an 18-month process in March to update the City's Comprehensive Plan. The last plan was adopted in 2002 and updated six years ago. Many of the people that live and work here today didn't back then and we want their input! Our area of impact is 66 square miles and we occupy half. We have a real opportunity to plan our Meridian of tomorrow.

In the middle of our city lies the Union Pacific RR corridor, one of the most important and underutilized corridors in the state. It is not only critical to moving freight but it must begin now for future use. There are many opportunities for moving people in this corridor – on foot, bike, bus or commuter vans. This is a focus area for Meridian and our neighbors from Caldwell to Boise.

The location of jobs and services are also critical to the comprehensive plan as they must be close to where people live. We will be looking at employment clusters and transitional land use which leads us to...

Strategic Focus Area #2: Economic Vibrancy.

The numbers are in and Meridian's economy continues to thrive. We saw over 2,800 new jobs this last year, with the largest increase in the Health Care sector. Not only did this sector gain more jobs but the increase in average wages was more than \$4,200!

New construction permits increased by 29% in residential and 36% in commercial. We saw a spike in market values with new commercial increasing 49% over 2016.

Ten Mile Crossing near I-84 and Ten Mile was 'a rising star' with the opening of AmeriBen and the start of construction on the second building for Paylocity and Horrocks Engineers. I am pleased to announce Brighton Corporation will be breaking ground this March on another four-story office building which will be their home! This good news is a result of the growth of these businesses which is exciting news on the job front.

The Village at Meridian continues to be a shining star, rising even higher. Their restaurants and retail set new records and businesses experienced strong year-over-year sales growth. In 2017, they welcomed three new office tenants bringing 40 jobs with plans to double over this next year. They added several new retailers and are at 90% occupancy.

The Village has attracted a 'first of its kind' residential project for Meridian. This planned 'active adult' development will overlook Kleiner Park. The upscale facility will have four stories of residential and a spacious clubhouse, another exciting project by Brighton Corporation.

The Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine (ICOM), Idaho's first medical school, moved their 'applicant status' last year to 'pre-accreditation' this year! They broke ground on their 94,000 square foot home last spring in Meridian, next to Idaho State University. They will open this fall

with a class of 150 students. It is a real testament that ICOM went from concept to accreditation to opening of doors in under two years. Hats off to everyone on this remarkable achievement! It took a village, from the Governor to our state legislators, to City Council and our Community Development Department and most importantly, ICOM's Dean, Dr. Robert Hasty and his team, who are other rising stars in our community!

This last year, we welcomed several businesses to Meridian and were excited to see the expansion of a few already here. Just look at who is investing here!!!

Our Downtown saw several locally-owned businesses open their doors but also had a few close. The energy, however, and activities continue to 'rise' with new ideas and events. The New Ventures Lab is full and home to 12 companies that employ 29 people.

Meridian Cycles moved locations to Main & Washington with larger space and lots of opportunities. The New Frontier Club changed ownership and the new owner has made a number of improvements, most noticeable are the outdoor dining area. Josh Evarts' Main and Broadway project is being re-scoped at this time. He and his wife Lori remain huge contributors to our old town!

While our downtown continues to evolve, sometimes it needs to return to its roots. The Zamzow's mill has been an icon in Meridian for decades. They are currently working with our Arts Commission to add a mural, reflecting the agricultural roots of the community. Later this year, they will be re-creating an old-fashioned feed store with farming equipment from yesteryear. This historical makeover will be in the front space that once housed a Zamzow's.

Downtown is also getting an improved entry corridor from the east as work has begun on Pine Avenue. Working together with MDC and ACHD, we will see a full rebuild from Main to Locust Grove, widened to three full lanes with connected and detached sidewalks. A welcome addition to this area!

Strategic Focus Area #3: Responsive Government.

Part of being 'responsive' is to engage. For the second year, our teens were engaged in an outreach program called Participatory Budgeting. With the involvement of Council President Joe Borton and support from our City Council and Parks team, our teens in the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council have an exciting new project to share.

Mikaela George is here to report more about this program:

Video - [MYAC Participatory Budgeting Produces New Memorial Plaza at Kleiner Park](#)
Construction on the Memorial Plaza began last fall. Bricks will soon be available for purchase and a ribbon cutting will be held on May 2nd to celebrate this project which was inspired and led by our teens.

In responsive government, transparency and ease of getting information are important. Our financials are easy to access from any electronic device, anywhere, using OpenGov. The public

has streamlined access to City Council documents using Novus Agenda. We also launched an online portal that has made public record requests even easier.

Public noticing for development hearings has been expanded using the NextDoor app. By using this app, we are able to inform more people about developments that might impact them. We are also working to add an area on our website home page to view development applications currently in the public hearing process.

Thanks to technology upgrades in Council Chambers, we now have improved online streaming. On February 1st, we officially began streaming commission meetings in addition to our City Council meetings. We are also exploring ways of utilizing technology to expand how we take public comment, virtually, at City Council meetings.

As I wrap up this focus area, a quick update on the courtroom issue that stems from a court order issued in 1994 to provide a courtroom. We presented a building plan to the courts in January, proposing to use the former city hall site on Idaho Ave. We are waiting for their decision. However, Meridian, along with Ada County, support a legislative approach to end this 24-year-old issue. The proposal is the result of a group of counties and cities and led by the Idaho Court Administrator. They are recommending to use new growth revenue to help pay for courts. This requires the state, counties, and cities to all pay a share rather than one more 'burden' on your property tax. Call your Legislators because we need their support!

Strategic Focus Area #4: Safe, Healthy, Secure.

Meridian continues to be listed as one the safest cities in Idaho and the nation. As of two weeks ago, we were once again named among the safest in Idaho, an accolade we've been receiving over the last 10 years.

Response time standards were set for the Fire Department last year and for Police last month. This gives our public safety departments important areas to measure and assess, providing information to City Council that will help determine when to add new fire stations or police officers.

Our Police Department's 'culture' was highlighted this year by an international police organization. They recognized the culture and community relationships of our department as one that others can learn from across the globe.

Video -

[*The Culture of the Meridian Police Department Recognized Internationally*](#)

Our police are always looking for ways to improve and better serve. This year, they partnered with Ada County Paramedics in training all officers to effectively use trauma kits to help save lives as they are usually first on the scene. Every officer now carries a kit that has medical supplies and tourniquets to assist with people suffering from severe trauma. This program was

led by Lt. Shawn Harper who has successfully been using tourniquets in the field for years and advocated for the trauma kits.

In addition to the kits, we now have AEDs in 24 police cars and 14 more on the way. This will give us 100% coverage.

Meridian Fire is also focused on tools for better outcomes. The Department and other Ada County public safety agencies launched the PulsePoint app last spring. The goal is to increase the chances of cardiac arrest survival by partnering with you, our citizens. The mobile phone app notifies citizen users where emergencies are occurring and if CPR is needed. If you are CPR trained, download the app and save a life!

Meridian Fire's approach to partnerships has many benefits, including financial savings. In October, they began planning and designing Fire Station #6, the first station to be built in the past nine years. As you can imagine, times have changed and so has the cost. Meridian partnered with Caldwell, who is also planning a fire station. Through this collaboration, a savings of approximately \$55,000 in Phase 1 of the design process was realized.

Public safety and health extend to our utilities. The Wastewater Division obtained a new federal permit for operations, the first since 1999. The permit regulations determine current and future standards. We now have four times the sample rate, equating to over a thousand samples per week, some requiring testing constituents at parts per trillion resolution! As part of these new testing requirements, we now need to prove that a flea, a minnow and algae are able to grow and reproduce within a water sample taken from our discharge into Five Mile Creek.

I'd like to acknowledge Laurelei McVey and the wastewater operations group who have been able to implement, develop and create the permit milestones, plans and reports themselves, saving the Department \$155,000. They, too, are rising stars!

Last year, we had a historical event at our wastewater plant that could have turned very bad. We faced a sewer tsunami without major incident. During the snowmelt of 'snowmageddon,' we received flows that were nearly five times higher than normal peak flow rates. That means that we processed 18 million gallons in a 24-hour period at a facility that handles just over seven million gallons on an average day. Safe, Healthy, Secure is a huge priority for our Public Works Department as this was an 'all hands on deck' event.

Another example of Safe, Healthy, Secure is The Hill project. This 22.5-acre campus will be a hub for education, recreation, wellness and literacy in the south. The City, YMCA, St. Lukes, West Ada and Meridian Library District have come together to build a facility that will serve as a model for communities across the country. The official opening for this project, including Hillsdale Park, has been set for May 25th. This will be one big celebration! The opening of Meridian Library District's temporary space is expected in June.

And lastly, Strategic Focus Area #5: Arts, Culture, & Recreation

There's so much to talk about! Storey Bark Park was recognized as one of the top dog parks in the Valley! We also saw West Ada Recreation District open their remodeled and expanded pool just next to our dog park.

We cut the ribbon on two park locations this year in north Meridian; the Reta Huskey Park and the Keith Bird Legacy Park. Both parks were made possible in part by land donated by developers. They are themed to the names they honor, bringing recreational opportunities to this growing part of our community.

In addition to the opening of Hillsdale Park in south Meridian, we will begin construction on what will be our largest park off of Lake Hazel Road. The Council has four names for the park they would like our public to weigh in on. I'm excited to see what kids have to say! Full buildout of this park will take a number of years and several phases.

Last year the Historic Preservation Commission brought you our Historic Walking Tour App. This year, the Meridian Arts Commission put together a Public Art Digital Tour. This online interactive map is a great way to access the location of public art in Meridian and learn more about it.

Pathways and connections continue to be important to our community. Last year we were able to continue our expansion of Five Mile Creek pathway with two quarter-mile segments. There are more to come in 2018! We are planning a ribbon cutting and bike tour on April 4th so please join us.

Parks and pathways are important to our residents. Hear what they had to say about what makes Meridian a Rising Star.

Video - [What Do You Love About Meridian?](#)

Family entertainment options were expanded this last year with choices like Urban Air and the new Jump Time facility. Did you know we have a nationally ranked attraction? We do - the Roaring Springs and Wahooz family-fun center! They have welcomed millions to Meridian over their 20 years of ownership as they continue to grow their amenities. I am pleased to share that they aren't done yet! They will be making improvements to their kiddie pool, soon to be known as Barefoot Bay, with three new slides and 20 play elements. They are also expanding their Wahooz events center from a facility that can seat 200 people to one that seats 600 and can be divided into 10 smaller rooms for meetings and receptions. Construction on this 'Galaxy Event Center' should be completed this year, a combined \$6.1 million-dollar project.

This expansion will bring needed space to hold events. There is a large demand for event and conference space in West Ada County. For years, there has been talk about a Meridian Auditorium District by businesses, non-profits, and residents, ultimately filling hotels whose 'bed tax' would pay for it. The Meridian Chamber and its partners have defined the need and

are developing a plan. Please support them as they work to create a Meridian Auditorium District.

While some legacies are yet to be written, others have been formed, which brings me to today's Legacy Award recipient.

Legacy Award

This year's recipient has built a personal legacy of kindness, humility, and hard work. Twenty years ago, he made a huge investment in Meridian and in kids and he continues to build on that to this day. Our recipient created one of my, and Idaho's, favorite tourist destinations and is a huge employer of young people. He, his wife and their companies have been active for decades supporting the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Birds of Prey and more. Throughout his career and businesses, his service and generosity, his leadership and quiet friendships, he has made a large impact. He has helped put Meridian on the map as a destination, given countless opportunities to our youth and beyond. Please join me in congratulating our 2018 Mayor's Legacy Award recipient, Tom Nicholson.

It has been my pleasure working with people like Tom Nicholson, Keith Bird, David Turnbull and the many others over the years that I have had the honor to recognize. They have a passion for this community, as do I. I very much enjoy serving this community and with your blessing and support, I would like to continue to do so. I love being your Mayor! We still have work to do and projects to see through!

Five strategic focus areas – five Olympic rings – we are a rising star going for the gold in 2018! Thank you for joining us.