Spring Creek Ranch
Blaine County, Idaho

A Strategy for a New Town

June 25-30, 2006
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
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ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a non-profit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 34,000 members and associates from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of America’s most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
President

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The goal of ULI’s 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 400 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, brownfields 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 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 five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel’s conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

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 five-day panel 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, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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The ULI panelists and staff members are indebted to a host of people for their help, advice, and support throughout the week. First and foremost, the panel thanks the sponsor, the Kirk Group, for inviting ULI to assist in planning a new town for Blaine County. The panel is tremendously grateful to George Kirk and Bob Kantor for the extraordinary generosity and hospitality they extended to the panel. In addition, the panelists greatly appreciate the dedication and skill of the Kirk Group’s consultant team. The panel sincerely thanks Marshall Bennett for sharing his time and knowledge during the panel process. Much appreciation goes to Monica Hanson and Josette Stellers for their exceptional efforts in helping the panel reach its goals expeditiously.

Finally, the panel would like to thank the dozens of community, business, and government leaders who added immeasurably to this publication by sharing their insights during the interview process. The panel thanks all of these people for offering their time and expertise, and for helping the panel understand the issues facing Blaine County.
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Blaine County’s first permanent settlers arrived in the mid-1800s. They quickly discovered the mining wealth of the area and were soon followed by a significant number of Irish, Welsh, German, and Chinese immigrants. Towns such as Bellevue and Hailey grew overnight. The prosperity brought by mining spurred other business interests.

Idaho Territory’s first electricity plant was installed in the valley, as was the first telephone system. Parallel to the mining boom, the sheep-feeding and shipping industries saw promising growth. Between 1910 and 1920, more than 1 million head of sheep trailed through the area each year, making Ketchum one of the largest sheep shipping centers in the United States.

Impressed with the Swiss ski resorts of St. Mortiz and Gstaad, Averell Harriman, chairman of the board of the Union Pacific Railroad, decided to build America’s first destination ski resort. On December 23, 1936, the Sun Valley Lodge opened for its first winter season. Ownership of the resort changed several times in the 1900s, but it still remains a popular Idaho destination today.

Blaine County’s current economy relies heavily on tourism, construction, and the second-home market. As is common in such destinations, a growing gap exists between the price of housing and what the workforce in the community can afford. Even property values in the most affordable portions of the county have become well out of reach for the entry-level homeowner (see figure 1).

As affordable housing options become scarce, the year-round workforce is commuting from ever greater distances, straining the transportation systems. Employers find employees increasingly difficult to attract because recruits are unable to locate acceptable housing and they complain existing affordable housing is of inferior design and construction. County businesses are beginning to suffer as they become increasingly dependent on the sporadic commerce of seasonal residents and tourists.

Study Area
The proposed Spring Creek new town site is located on approximately 650 to 800 acres of the existing 2,800-acre Spring Creek Ranch. Nestled in
the intersection of Highway 20 and Highway 75, any new development could be hidden from north-south vistas by the surrounding Timmerman Hills. A proposed site for a new regional airport is a few miles farther south on Highway 75. The site itself is a working ranch.

The Panel’s Assignment

The Kirk Group requested that the ULI Advisory Services Panel assess the viability of a new town on the Spring Creek property as a tool for enhancing Blaine County’s livability for its year-round workforce. After conferring with the sponsor, the panel decided to focus on the threshold question of the fundamental viability of a new town on the Spring Creek property, in both the physical and public policy contexts. The panel has devoted its principal efforts to that threshold question.

A great many of the questions directed to the panel were of a technical or quantitative character that the panel was not in a position to judge. For example, at this stage of project conception, the panel cannot judge the adequacy of water or the legal validity of water rights, fiscal effects on the community, or effects on wildlife or present transportation systems. Such questions must be addressed in a framework of thorough studies that are based on detailed proposed land plans, economic assumptions, and public standards.
Summary of Recommendations

The panel began by assessing the definition of a new town compared to a subdivision or a planned community. Within that definition, the panel then evaluated the Spring Creek site in its physical context. Finally, the panel reviewed current public policy in Blaine County with respect to land use and that current policy’s application to both new towns and this site.

The panel concluded that a new town is appropriate for accommodating the long-term growth of the community and can contribute to sensible growth patterns and the best land use within the valley. The panel also concluded that a new town is viable, in a physical context, at this site. Existing characteristics of terrain and location are suitable to support a new town development concept for Spring Creek.

At the same time, however, the panel finds that current public policy does not support creation of a new town. Blaine County 2025, which partially addresses new town issues, falls short of establishing defined criteria for a new town. Moreover, the Blaine County 2025 plan does not call for such development in this location. The plan does, however, acknowledge the possibility of new towns and does address many broad considerations. It presents a good foundation for shaping future growth, but more-comprehensive planning efforts are needed.
What is lacking is a full set of criteria for determining the need and location for a new town.

The panel concluded that although a new town development at Spring Creek is not now achievable because of current policy, it may be appropriate in the longer term after more-definitive study and regional planning. Most important, consideration for a new town in the future must be pursued as a joint effort of both the county and the developer. In the panel’s view, the county must orchestrate the creation of a new town and the developer should implement the vision.

This report offers detailed explanations of the conclusions and suggestions for actions that should be undertaken in the coming years to revisit the suitability of this site for a new town. The panel additionally offers a set of guiding principles to apply as the project moves forward.
Market Potential

This section discusses the market potential and feasibility for a new town in Blaine County, in general, and at Spring Creek, in particular.

New Town as a Land Development Model

The concept of a new town can mean very different things to different people and in different locations. Thinking about a new town evokes sentimentality for the “way things used to be,” the vision of a slower time as well as the hope for better solutions to age-old problems of traffic, environmental disruption, ecological conservation, and faster-paced lifestyles. The term is used in the Blaine County 2025 document to refer to “villages that would be a joint effort of the county and developers.” No further elaboration of the components and motivations for a new town are discussed, leaving open the question of what makes a new town. How is it distinguished from the other county development types of subdivision, planned community, and existing cities?

Figure 2 lists core elements useful in differentiating these three development typologies: subdivision, planned community, and new town. It identifies defining characteristics in three loosely woven categories, or “constructs”: why is it done (development strategy), how does it fit into the larger region (contextual relationship to region), and what is typically found in each (program elements). A fourth category called community connections (valuing the people) enters the more-subjective realm of how to create community spirit and connections.

Figure 2 provides an overview of what each type of development brings to the table in any community. It does not assess a specific project. It is a generalized evaluation of what typically distinguishes each development type and how it contributes to any area over time. The report next explores how each defining characteristic relates to Spring Creek and Blaine County.

Implications for Creating a New Town

Against the backdrop of figure 2, the Spring Creek proposal can be reviewed to identify threshold issues that the development team must consider if it is to achieve the goals shared with the panel. Conversely, the proposed development should be reviewed within the context of current Blaine County planning proposals and issues raised during the panel’s interview process to identify alignment and points of difference.

Development Strategy Constructs

The panel developed a series of “development strategy constructs” to provide a context for reviewing the Spring Creek Ranch proposal.

Hallmarks. These are meant to capture the essence of the three development models. The hallmarks offered in the figure are not intended to be a complete list but rather a high-level view of one of the most significant identifiers separating a development form from other models. As an example, a planned community is typically distinguished by its emphasis (both physically and strategically) on creating a mixed-use environment that includes a

Development in Blaine County typically is directed to the valleys.
## Figure 2
Subdivision, Planned Community, or New Town: Defining Characteristics of Land Development Model Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Strategy</th>
<th>Subdivision</th>
<th>Planned Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hallmarks</strong></td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>Mixed use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason for being</strong></td>
<td>Market opportunity, land availability</td>
<td>Market opportunity, creative vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time horizon/capitalization</strong></td>
<td>Short term/debt based</td>
<td>Long term/sophisticated debt and equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Land developer, builder led</td>
<td>Developer led, builder supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evolution</strong></td>
<td>None, fixed point in time</td>
<td>Some, depending on level of control of community covenants and restrictions; usually highly prescriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benchmarks of success</strong></td>
<td>Internal rate of return</td>
<td>Internal rate of return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contextual Relationship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to larger region</th>
<th>Minimal/appended to existing fabric</th>
<th>Could go either insular or connected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jobs strategy/character</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>May make land available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic contribution</strong></td>
<td>Minimal tax base; construction jobs</td>
<td>Increased tax base; potential jobs and sales tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
<td>Local jurisdiction, annexed or simply within existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>Homeowners association (HOA)/Property owners association (POA)/local improvement district (LID) annexed or within local jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential offerings</th>
<th>Singular, 1–3 product lines</th>
<th>Mixed, multiple builders and product lines; carefully choreographed; more prescriptive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreation, open-space amenities</td>
<td>None to limited with market-driven recreation, code-compliant open space</td>
<td>Typically private to community residents, extensively programmed, quality of life and market targeted; exactions by local jurisdiction; code-compliant open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Sometimes: retail and service oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services/infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>Plug and play, use existing capacities</td>
<td>Either plug and play or some new infrastructure; potential pro rata cost sharing of services and infrastructure costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td>Plug and play; build to (exacerbate) existing capacity</td>
<td>Strategic/market-driven responses to provide alternative mobility options</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Connections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community organizations</th>
<th>Existing</th>
<th>Newly created HOA/POA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Public or private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police/fire/EMS</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks/open space</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation/libraries</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>Private/district, library district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/performing arts</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>Contract, unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service oversight</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>Contract by HOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nongovernmental organizations</td>
<td>Existing jurisdiction</td>
<td>If market will bear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### New Town

- Holistic
- Regional needs, social responsibility
- Long term/patient, socially responsible equity and debt
- Collaboration with government, multiple developers/builders
- Cornerstone; flexibility in land use evolution, design, and character while maintaining core framework concepts
- Place making, diversity, economic benefits, financial sustainability

**Catalyst, direct response to regional needs**

- Always makes land available; proactive strategy to generate/attract jobs
- Diverse tax base; strategic and proactive job generation
- HOA/POA/LID with some form of self-sustaining government

**Deliberate approach to create economic diversity; range of housing choice by price, lifestyle, and demographic; multiple builders, product lines; more organic**

- Open to broader public, embraces regional values while adding value and range of opportunity to community; willing contributor to regional green infrastructure
- Always: professional and career plus retail/service
- New infrastructure; revenue neutral
- Transit ready and transit supportive; conscious decisions about how people move around town and connect to region

**Newly created HOA/POA plus new community-based organizations**

- Public or private
- Contract with jurisdiction
- Town-based
- Town-based or district
- Town staff
- If market will bear
variety of residential product offerings; community services; recreation and lifestyle elements; and employment, commercial, and retail land uses.

Although a new town starts from this same platform, it moves to a higher level by looking beyond the simplicity of land use designations and thinking about how their interactions, synergies, and functional relationships may create a sum greater than the parts. In a holistic view, each land use is not evaluated as a standalone economic decision but rather on the role it plays in creating a more vibrant, diverse, and interesting community. Thus, an initial retail component may not economically benefit the developer, but by its very presence it creates a focal point for the community, reduces the needs for daily vehicle trips to buy a gallon of milk, and generates a few jobs within the community. These benefits may far outweigh the limited economic gain as measured solely by land use evaluation.

Reason for Being. The current demand for new housing and dearth of affordable housing in the valley indicate a strong market opportunity for new development. However, the panel has not seen any hard data and in the absence of a rigorous market analysis and program projection cannot confirm or refute this assumption. Assuming that upon a more detailed analysis a significant market opportunity is presented, Spring Creek clearly has a spectacular piece of land available and has assembled a team of consultants to help craft a creative vision.

These elements should be harnessed and placed within the context of the recent analyses and studies completed by Blaine County to determine how this project might help resolve a broader set of regional needs. Those needs include affordable employee housing, better retail opportunities, a more-distinctive sense of place, employment and economic diversification, and conservation of significant open space assets.

Horizon/Capitalization. Building new communities has been the dream of social activists, land developers, and Fortune 500 companies for more than 150 years. Throughout this history the one recurring lesson has been that the undercapitalized and impatient cannot survive, regardless of the strength of their vision. The community-building process is extremely capital intensive and must have deep pockets to survive the inevitable real estate cycles. Layered onto changing market cycles are the significant costs associated with building new infrastructure and public facilities from scratch—and in a true new town, underwriting the costs of economic development strategies to attract jobs, subsidizing retail and community centers to create place, and offsetting early community effects before the tax base is sufficient to support the services required from external providers.

Given both the opportunity and responsibility of Spring Creek LLC, these costs cannot be dismissed casually. The desire to create a new town that provides a viable, cost-effective housing strategy for the valley, while also creating a vibrant, active place reminiscent of pre-1990s Blaine County cities, will require a commitment of significant, patient capital and the willingness to deliver products in a thoughtful manner that not only matches demand but also ensures the building of community.

Implementation. The maturing process of community building has become as much art as science. Successful models today are business-driven endeavors that are led by the strong hand of a mas-
ter developer and supported to a large degree by a full stable of homebuilders—national, regional, and local. The emphasis is often on rapid sales and movement of product to reduce capital carrying costs while building critical mass as quickly as possible. Efficiency, rigorous execution, and cost control are often the guiding principles at the implementation stage.

In building a new town, however, the “strong hand” will need to yield to a more collaborative process in which many stakeholders participate in key decisions to ensure broader diversity, a more organic evolution of the community form, and a greater sense of contribution. This process is messy, and project efficiency and execution rigor give way to inclusion and more free-form delivery of products. Opening the door to a broader set of “authors” for the development of Spring Creek will require Spring Creek LLC to play a stronger role as the community facilitator—rather than the creator. The ultimate vision for the new town will become more diverse but will be more broadly embraced. Where community stakeholders have had a role in defining the community vision, long-term support (both in terms of the entitlement arena and market success) has been realized through more certain and shorter approval times, more word-of-mouth referrals for sales, and increased public support of the community as it evolves.

**Evolution.** Planned communities from the 1980s and 1990s were wedded to heavy-handed control of every aspect of the community. For example, architectural controls, prescriptive material choices and paint colors, and parking and landscaping regulations produced a generation of communities that stand as a testament to the vintage of their creation—inflexible, unevolving museum pieces from the era in which they were constructed. Arguably, Elkhorn, Idaho, offers an example of a well-executed but static community design. Conversely, great neighborhoods and towns that are most admired (and often have the highest economic values) are places that evolved somewhat organically, with happenstance additions and renovations creating a patchwork quilt of interesting architecture and public places. Although some controls are necessary to minimize disruptive land uses or designs that create a public or economic nuisance, the distinctive character of rural and small western cities is their diversity. Given a landscape setting as powerful as the Wood River Valley, a harmonious but diverse architectural character can help create a place that is both original and interesting while paying homage to the particular places, such as Ketchum and Hailey.

The developers of Spring Creek need to think about design codes and rules that are more evolutionary than prescriptive. The town should look and feel as if it has evolved over time instead of being parachuted in during one brief epoch in 2010. Emphasis should be placed more on those characteristics that create a sense of place—building mass and placement, functional relationships between uses, natural materials that are both healthy and sustainable—and less on dogmatic or historic architectural codes that reflect a current style or period of design.

**Benchmarks of Success.** In a world where issues of conservation, environmental responsibility, and social equity are coming into increasing focus, the scorecard of success needs to be broadened beyond traditional financial metrics.

Historically, real estate development has measured success solely on financial return—primarily internal rate of return. Although this measure is still used to assist in raising or structuring project capital, an increasing number of investors are seeking better-rounded returns measured in intangibles, such as pride in places created, role in helping solve tough social issues, or protection of significant natural resources.

Spring Creek comes to Blaine County at a significant decision point for the valley and its residents. A shifting local economy and real estate landscape, coupled with national trends in lifestyle choices and wealth distribution, means the Blaine County of old must make some tough choices. Spring Creek and the county have an opportunity—in creating a new town—to harness best practices in open-space conservation, affordable housing, place making, and economic development and create a positive choice for people currently living in or moving to the Wood River Valley. The metrics by which the community will measure the new town’s suc-
cess must be defined early on, and then programming, planning and design, implementation, and long-term evolution must be organized to ensure those goals are achieved.

This effort requires a much broader community discussion about what is important to the valley and how this project can help achieve some of those core values. Similarly, the Spring Creek development team needs to identify what level of economic and social return is required to feel their efforts—and their investors’ patience—are adequately rewarded.

**Contextual Relationship Constructs**

The panel developed a list of attributes for which the project should be reviewed.

**Relationship to Larger Region.** A typical subdivision is literally appended onto whatever the existing development is. It may or may not relate well to surrounding land uses, transportation capacities, or community services. It sometimes appears to be merely plopped in place, creating a jarring new development form immediately adjacent to a long-time land use. Planned communities can be completely self-contained. The proverbial gated community creates the mental image of an insular place, intended to be separate and different from its surroundings. It can also be highly integrated into an area, carefully planned, and executed to blend into existing landscapes and development patterns. A new town, in contrast, can be a catalyst that responds to specific regional needs and goals. It is driven by social responsiveness, community values, and the desire to create new market opportunities based on local issues and concerns.

Spring Creek can be a catalyst for regional collaboration that begins to address transportation, job growth, jobs and housing balance, and quality of life—issues affecting the entire region. Or it can be a divisive fissure that undermines the very things it purports to want to address: affordable housing, environmental conservation, and traffic congestion. As a catalyst it can create the forums necessary to have ongoing and productive dialogues about how to realistically resolve these and other community issues in a way that makes sense locally. Nonetheless, the county and its cities must recognize that one development will not and cannot solve all the issues the region faces. Through a collaborative process, citizens, decision makers, and property owners must identify what can and cannot be realistically addressed by a new town at this location.

**Jobs Strategy/Character.** In a subdivision no attempt is made to address the creation of jobs. Jobs may be created to service the ultimate development of the lots in the subdivision (that is, service-sector jobs to support the maintenance needs of the buildings and provide personal services to the new residents). Not considered primary jobs, they are usually the jobs most directly affected by changes in the spending habits of these new residents. A planned community may actually designate land for commercial development (office, retail, light industrial, or restaurant). Some job generation and direct business development may result with a planned community, and clearly a resort-based planned community can create jobs. Again, such jobs are dependent on the spending habits of those vacationers who come there. In the case of a new town, the goal is to be a full-service community. Not only is land made available for commercial and industrial uses, but also a proactive strategy exists to generate and attract jobs.

Spring Creek has the opportunity to become a mini-employment center for the south county area. To do so, it needs to incorporate an employment strategy as part of its development plan. This strategy needs to be based on real information about employment and business growth in the county. Simply making land available and hoping that businesses and retailers will come will not make it happen and may drain from existing cities employment base important to their vitality. A coordinated effort with the cities and Blaine County that sets realistic business recruitment, support, and retention goals should be part of ongoing discussions to determine how to integrate commercial development into the new town in a way that supports countywide economic development goals. More information is available through the International Economic Development Council, www.iedconline.org.

**Economic Contribution.** A subdivision contributes minimally to the tax base, a planned community contributes some increase, and a new town cre-
ates the potential for a diverse tax base and job generation. In an economic development sense, subdivisions and planned communities provide residents who will shop and do business locally. Subdivisions and planned communities do not create permanent jobs. A new town, in order to sustain itself over time, will have land use categories that create a diverse tax base and an economic development strategy to attract and sustain permanent jobs in the community. Economic development strategies, as indicated previously, must be based on local and regional employment trends.

Spring Creek has the opportunity to work with the county and the cities to identify types of locally based employment that could be nurtured and grown in the valley. If the airport is relocated in proximity to the Spring Creek area, the potential exists for spin-off businesses that support the airport or need a location close to an airport. Having these businesses relate to and support the economics of a new town seems like a better alternative than merely having a single-use business park located next to the airport. How the airport and the Spring Creek development can work together needs to be explored jointly by the developers, Blaine County, and the city of Hailey.

**Governance.** Both subdivisions and planned communities come under the auspices of the local approving jurisdiction. A planned community may also be overlaid with a homeowners association (HOA), local improvement district (LID), or similar structures with their own rules (covenants) that are enforced by that association or district. Often, community members pay dues to that organization. A new town may also have an HOA or LID, depending on how infrastructure, parks, and other amenities will be operated and paid for over time. It will also have its own form of self-sustaining government that could control and operate these same amenities.

A new town in Blaine County would operate in the same manner as existing cities and have similar working relationships with the county. It may decide to contract for certain services that are already offered by the county, such as policing services provided by the sheriff’s office. However, a trademark difference between a new town and a planned community or subdivision is self-governance and the accompanying self-responsibility that goes along with governance, which is manifested in the physical presence of a city office that focuses the civic functions and discussions of the community. Adding another city to the county political landscape may seem daunting, but the upside is that county elected officials and staff will not be directly burdened with the demands of some number of new residents and businesses. The day-to-day issues of potholes, snow removal, tree replacement, trash removal, and the like will be dealt with at the new local level. The ongoing regional issues can be funneled through locally elected officials, rather than managed by ad hoc special interest groups that may or may not represent the legitimate interests of the entire community.

### Program Elements Constructs

The panel suggested consideration of the following program elements in developing the Spring Creek proposal.

**Residential Offerings.** Residential offerings provide the backbone of the new town, the canvas that communities are built upon. In places that celebrate diversity and desire to maintain it, the product mix and residential offerings are critical components of the proposed new town program. In ensuring availability of diverse products at all times in the community’s evolution, a detailed analysis must be completed of market potential for a range of products, and creative land planning, architectural design, and capital structure must be brought to bear.

Given national and local trends, the program should include a range of densities (one unit per acre up to 40-plus units per acre) and product types (single-family homes, townhomes, cottage products, cohousing products, mixed-use apartments over retail centers) to provide a variety of living options for single families, single-parent households, seniors, and intergenerational buyers.

**Recreation/Open Space.** In a setting as spectacular as the Wood River Valley, recreation is not just an amenity but an everyday part of life. Planning of the new town will require creativity and response to obvious market expectations for access to amenities such as hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing trails. Other venues that build community and
strengthen quality of life include more-passive nature watching, interpretive open space, and formal and informal parks that relieve higher-density products, create a neighborhood focus, and preserve interior natural resources connected to exterior open lands.

**Employment.** The difference between bedroom subdivisions and real towns is the ability to work near your home. For Spring Creek, a serious test of the commitment to creating a new town will be going beyond simply allocating land for commercial and retail uses and proactively programming, choreographing, and potentially underwriting the creation of career-oriented professional jobs within the community. This course is not for the weak of heart, and in a transportation-challenged setting such as the Wood River Valley, attracting a major employer is not likely. A more creative approach is job incubators and development assistance for entrepreneurs that will help sow the seeds for future growth of companies that can call the new town—and the county—their home. Another potential source of jobs would be if senior executives who come to the valley for quality-of-life reasons decided to relocate their businesses, assuming high-quality commercial space was available.

**Services/Infrastructure.** In a new town context, infrastructure must be seen as more than simply a requirement for approval. A holistic approach that seizes on the resource opportunities of infrastructure, such as creative use of reclaimed wastewater, harvesting and cleansing stormwater, and alternative transportation modes supported by the community, is essential to thinking beyond the simple engineering solution.

Funding of infrastructure operations and maintenance must be carefully structured so that adequate resources are available to create a high-quality system that meets user expectations while not unduly burdening homeowners and their total cost of ownership. This factor is particularly important in the face of the high percentage of affordable housing sought for the town.
Community and Civic Facilities. In new towns, civic facilities—such as churches, library, town halls, schools, and fire stations—serve a both pragmatic and symbolic role. As organizations, they play an important role in bonding community members around spiritual beliefs, their children's education, or pride of location within a well-managed community (see sections regarding Community Services and Community Organizations). But the buildings that house these services and organizations also play an important role in the physical presence of the community. They should be in key locations where they emphasize the community's form and provide a focal point for a collection of residences. When organized in an appropriate manner on their site or parcel, these civic buildings provide a civic open space, defined through an adjoining park or larger setback, to contrast with the surrounding density of housing or nonresidential uses.

Although church generation numbers vary widely by community and location, a rule of thumb is to provide one two- to three-acre church site per 500 to 1,000 residential units. School generation numbers are typically provided by the local education authority. Districts typically have good generation data based on overall community trends, but the specific target market envisioned for the community needs to be examined, and district-wide generation assumptions should be refined based on targeted household composition. At a minimum, a new town should have at least one elementary school because a school provides one of the most important community symbols and functions in any new town development. It is where both children and parents grow connected to their community and other residents and, if designed properly, can demonstrate the architectural quality and character of the community.

Fire stations and town halls are two icons of small-town life. For a new town in Blaine County, they would both provide valuable services and distinguish the town from a planned community. The size, location, and programming of each building need to be developed in conjunction with the appropriate service providers, but their location and exterior design should be carefully considered to optimize the capital investment, to ensure they support the community's theme and marketing message, and to avoid producing something value engineered to the point of being a community eyesore or opportunity missed.

Retail and Office. The retail component and office/employment components of a new town are important distinguishing features that separate new towns from subdivisions and even planned communities. However, they are also the most difficult to develop, lease, and make economically viable in small towns with limited residential support. In new town development around the country, a small retail or mercantile component is increasingly recognized as an important element creating a sense of place in new communities. Yet without a significant commitment of annual subsidy these elements rarely can stand on their own financially.

One of the country's best examples of leading with a crossroads mercantile to anchor a new community is found in Boise, Idaho, in the town of Hidden Springs. Although the developer constructed a compelling 6,500-square-foot community-serving structure with post office, convenience store, café, day care, and sales center, even ten years after its opening the center requires in excess of $80,000 in support subsidies. Nevertheless, its presence and service as a community gathering point and the role it plays in reducing vehicle trips for convenience goods cannot be measured in dollars.

Empirical evidence from new towns and planned communities around the country indicates the difficulty of supporting more than about 15,000 square feet of retail or commercial space within a new town of only 1,000 residential units. As the total count increases to about 2,000 units, retail offerings that include a small greengrocer, dry cleaner, ATM, bakery/café, coffee shop, newsstand, and the like all become more viable.

Transportation. If the Spring Creek development team is successful in locating the town center along Highway 75, its capacity to support more depth of program also increases its viability. If a park-and-ride facility and transit stop are woven into the town center, the viability becomes even higher, because additional people are added to the customer base, increasing visible vitality and spending power. Also, the relocation of the airport may create demand for transit facilities at this lo-
Finally, a new town development has the potential for a design and density patterns that support an internal transit system and alternative transportation modes.

**Community Connections Constructs**

The panel believes the following community attributes need to be considered when reviewing large-scale projects.

**Community Organizations.** How does the subdivision, planned community, or new town relate to community organizations? Community organizations grow in a variety of ways. In a subdivision or planned community, people will plug into existing organizations as needed and appropriate. In a planned community, an HOA or similar organization often is created to administer special assessments to maintain open space or other amenities held for private use by the residents and owners of that development. Sometimes these organizations also function as community organizations. But they often fail to integrate into existing community systems because their reason for being is exclusive to a particular development. Such organizations can be problematical because they never receive adequate training on their role.

In a new town scenario, the potential exists to add to the regional pool of community organizations constructively. Some regionally based organizations may benefit with new memberships located in previously underrepresented areas. New opportunities for the pooling of resources can occur.

In the case of Spring Creek, community organizations may be key players in establishing the sense of place and belonging for the future residents of the new town. Although a new town’s future residents need to belong to and participate in countywide organizations to become part of the human fabric that is Blaine County, they will need their own set of community-based organizations to deal with and focus the energies of the local population in and around Spring Creek itself. Developing the institutional knowledge and capability to organize for local community goals will help identify Spring Creek as a community in its own right, not an appendage to or unwanted stepchild of the county. The residents of Spring Creek will ultimately have issues and needs different from those of other county residents or the residents of the existing cities in the county. Locally based community organizations can help solve those local issues as they arise—organically, flexibly, and with local resources. In Blaine County, the school district currently offers child-based programs that support community-based initiatives. This resource could be used to assist in community building in Spring Creek or another new town.

Blaine County has countywide organizations already in place that will want to call upon the energy and resources of the new residents of Spring Creek. Sharing in community-based efforts to achieve common goals of countywide organizations keeps the identity of the county intact. The current division of the county into north and south elements does little to build the kinds of relationships needed to solve regional problems of traffic and environmental degradation or to maintain strong schools.

Creating a structure for community organizations in a new town should address the following issues:

- Providing land and building space for community-based organizations as part of the development;
- Establishing an orientation and training manual for community-based organizations;
- Providing information on existing community-based organizations and services offered;
- Working with the county to identify gaps in community services and explore alternatives to bridge identified gaps;
- Establishing clear lines of communication between community-based organizations, Spring Creek officials, and county officials to work through new community-based issues as they arise;
- Establishing clear roles and responsibilities for the governance of Spring Creek and providing assistance to local community groups who identify unmet community needs.

**Community Services.** Community services—including schools, police, fire, emergency services, parks and open space, recreation, libraries, arts and culture, and performing arts—are as important as
physical infrastructure, such as water, sewer, and storm drainage, to meet the physical needs of any community. Whereas some, such as police and fire, are directly related to life/safety, the other less-tangible services are important components of what makes a community livable.

The subdivision typically uses existing services, while a planned community may create its own special taxing entity to pay for specific services the developers consider important amenities that will appeal to their target market. Rarely will either of these types of developments create its own district and hire its own staff to cover the life/safety services.

A new town has the opportunity to provide a gamut of services, drawing on its own taxing authority and ability to contract with existing service providers to bring the appropriate level of service to its constituent residents. A new town also has the ability to directly control the service provider, if it chooses to staff and support that service. It can also contract for services with an existing service provider, such as using the county for police protection. These services are usually provided through an intergovernmental agreement that spells out the conditions for service and costs.

Sometimes the cultural aspects of community services are provided through nonprofit organizations. Whether government sponsored or through nonprofit organizations, a subdivision would rarely provide land or monetary support for such efforts. The planned community will plug into existing resources or may create its own through a special district—which may be considered private amenities, not open to the public at large.

The new town scenario would provide cultural amenities open to the public at large, not just the residents of the community. Such amenities are a hallmark characteristic of a new town compared to other development types; they represent the way a new town could practically and beneficially add to the depth of community services on a regional basis. Faith-based organizations and other non-governmental groups also have a place in the new town scenario. Land or buildings for these groups can be incorporated into the overall development plan for a new town. Planned communities sometimes have such organizations, but their ability to locate in a planned community depends more on what the market will bear (which equates to the availability of land at a cost that such groups can afford).

Spring Creek has the opportunity to create a full range of community services, but the services must be developed in a way that fosters regional cooperation rather than regional competition for scarce volunteer and monetary resources. It also has the opportunity to control the level of service and quality of life/safety service it provides to its residents, if it chooses to have its own staff dedicated to those services. In addition, the physical presence of a town government—no matter how small an office—will provide a central location for the discussing, processing, and initial meeting venue for startup groups, educational programs, and even local cultural events.

Through the development of a new town, Blaine County has the opportunity to provide a better level of service to other communities at the south end of the valley. Existing levels of service should not be compromised by new development, however.

In providing community services through a new town the following issues must be considered:

- Investigating current gaps in service levels with existing life/safety service providers;
- Identifying satisfactory life/safety levels of service for new development at various density scenarios and mixes of uses;
- Identifying alternatives for providing a full range of cultural, health, and educational amenities in the new town such as bookmobiles, traveling art shows, or mobile health clinics;
- Working with local cultural and educational groups to bring programs to the new town and discussing space needs and providing opportunities for shared office space or remote office locations on a rotating basis;
- Establishing a community service strategy as part of the development phasing for the project jointly with the service providers in the county.
The Blaine County 2025 process identified a preferred future for the Wood River Valley. It recommended that Blaine County retain today’s community character by limiting growth outside of towns and promoting development within already developed areas. It allows some clustered development to occur on the edges of the existing towns, to protect natural resources and wildlife habitat. The preferred development scenario of the Blaine County 2025 development plan is intended to achieve the following goals:

- Limit growth occurring in the unincorporated county to ensure efficient provision of county services;
- Conserve land and resources in rural and remote areas of the county;
- Conserve agricultural land and reduce development patterns that will interfere with agricultural operations;
- Increase protection of environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, streams, and hill slopes.

The values listed in the Blaine County 2025 plan include the following:

- Protecting natural resources;
- Developing efficient infrastructure and services;
- Achieving regional cooperation.

Scenarios C and D of Blaine County 2025 call for 75 percent growth of development in towns and areas of city impact (ACIs) and 25 percent in the unincorporated county. Irrigated agricultural areas in the southern part of the county (the Bellevue Triangle) will continue in agricultural use.

Although the favored land use Scenario C of Blaine County 2025 did not preclude new towns, they were designated as a development approach that needed more examination. Scenario D would have expressly allowed new town development if it had been selected. Interestingly, the 2025 process found that a majority of people favored new towns as a potential development option.

The following general criteria are specified in Blaine County 2025 for the development of new towns:

- Location near a major road;
- Ability of the county, the developers, or both to provide a community water and sewer system and other services, such as police, fire, and schools;
- Location where the development would not affect sensitive environmental resources, such as wetlands, streams, rivers, wildlife habitats, or irrigated agricultural lands.

The Blaine County 2025 plan presupposes that more-specific criteria need to be developed to evaluate new town proposals and that a consultant will be hired to elaborate those criteria.

Regional Issues

The panel identified a number of regional issues imperative in creating a new town at Spring Creek. The panel believes that enhanced valley-wide cooperation is essential for managing the identified challenges. During its interviews with community members, the panel found a disconnect between the county’s vision and that of the cities. The following items need to be considered in an effort to improve regional cooperation:

- Providing affordable workforce housing: The availability of affordable workforce housing is a key to the long-term viability of the Wood River Valley. The county and several cities have recognized the urgency by implementing inclusionary zoning. Furthermore, a needs assessment is
underway and soon to be completed. This important study ought to be the basis for setting specific goals and policies because it should identify long-term affordability needs.

• Siting the new airport in the south valley: The panel found strong support for the relocation of the airport to the south end of the valley. A new airport could improve the possibilities for economic growth by virtue of upgraded air service and new job creation. The relocation also presents an opportunity to master plan the vacated airport property, assuming that the relationship with the Friedman family can be resolved. An opportunity exists for a mix of uses, including affordable housing.

• Preserving natural resources and open spaces of the valley: The fabric of open space that gives the valley its unique backdrop and pastoral valley floors must be conserved and protected to maintain long-term economic and biologic health of the land. New development should be carefully accommodated to increase economic opportunity and viability of the valley, but it should not come at the expense of open-space assets. Instead, a comprehensive approach to creating an interconnected, multipurpose, and biologically functional “web” of green spaces must be developed in advance of development pressures. These resources are often called “green infrastructure,” a term that signifies natural resource assets, and should be viewed and organized with the same level of urgency and rigor as gray infrastructure assets, such as roads, water, and sewer. Thus, the consequences of development must be considered within the context of their effect on open space and conservation of the natural resources of the valley.

Because water can be a limiting factor of the development capacity of a region, the long-term consequences of water distribution should be considered at the regional level. All water conservation measures should be considered, and preservation of water quality is a high priority.
• Retaining and diversifying the regional employment base: The increase in second-home ownership has shifted the traditional tourist-based economy to a service-based market. Consequently, escalating real estate prices have increasingly kept workers from living in the Wood River Valley. The demand for year-round retail appears to have declined with the increase in second homes. During the interview process, the cyclical nature of the economy and the need for more-balanced demand were raised as concerns.

• Capitalizing on the distinctive nature of the region: The Wood River Valley is a rare environment. In order to enhance economic activity, a concerted regional effort should be made to promote and thereby capitalize on the area’s exceptional amenities, such as skiing, ice skating, biking, water sports, and cultural activities. If none exists, a regional chamber of commerce or tourism board should be created.

• Annexing contiguous land outside city limits and promoting sprawl: The panel is concerned that the recommendation for growth in the ACIs will promote continuing sprawl. Consideration of increased density and infill would be more in line with smart growth tenets. The panel is also concerned about concentrating development in the canyons rather than pursuing infill within the existing cities. Infill uses the existing infrastructure more effectively while supporting local economic activity.

• Implementing a TDR program: The purpose of a transfer of development rights (TDR) program is to convert large-lot development (often considered sprawl) to more compact development. However, in the panel’s experience, the county TDR program, as currently being implemented, combined with the county downzoning, appears to further perpetuate the problem of sprawl rather than solve it. The problem is that the TDR receiving areas are sprinkled across the Bellevue Triangle and the allowable lot sizes are fairly large. The consequence is sprawl-like development patterns.

• Confronting transportation implications: Traffic problems must be approached from a regional perspective. Should Spring Creek be developed, its linkage with existing employment centers needs to be resolved because residents of the new town will increase use of Route 75. Traffic mitigation plans need to be developed that include improved bus service, park-and-ride lots, high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes, slug lines (informal car pools), and car pool support.

**Relationship of Blaine County Land Use Issues to Spring Creek Development**

A new town at Spring Creek is an opportunity to positively influence regional well-being as well as offer solutions to regional land use challenges. Spring Creek is capable of meeting the general criteria for new towns as specified in *Blaine County 2025*. Although the development will create adverse effects, opportunities exist to mitigate those through good land use planning and practices.

• Contribute to the increase in the supply of affordable housing through the construction of a
significant and diverse housing stock, including workforce housing.

- Capitalize on the new airport site by providing both nearby housing, and office and commercial space that could support new businesses.

- Assist in creating a new employment base for the region.

- Provide water, sewer, and other infrastructure that make the new town self-supporting.

- Be the receiving area for TDRs, absorb new growth, and shorten commute times for up-valley workers who are currently living in the far south end of the county or Twin Falls. The development of a new town could preserve or limit the pressure on agricultural land by concentrating development in a compact footprint.

Establishing a time frame for development of new town criteria is essential. Rather than relying on a consultant alone, the panel believes that the county should establish a process for discussing the county’s criteria for a new town. This process will enable the community to work together to understand the role of a new town and that of the larger community.

**Development Timing for the Site**

The preferred scenario identified in *Blaine County 2025* does not appear to support the creation of a new town at this time. Instead, it appears to support limited development in rural areas and canyons. The anticipated downzoning by the county will make seeking approval for new town development even more difficult.

The panel recognizes the potential value of this new town to the larger community. The panel strongly encourages the developer and the county to immediately begin discussions about the steps necessary for its implementation.

The panel found that additional information regarding development of the site is necessary at this time and does not recommend moving forward until more due diligence is completed. The developer has an opportunity to gather the necessary information to answer many of the questions that have arisen during the panel’s process. This information is necessary for the entitlement process and includes housing types and demand, transportation impacts, site analysis, various environmental analyses, project feasibility, and market studies. An opportunity exists to coordinate Spring Creek’s development with the possible relocation of the airport. It can be a catalyst for the success of Spring Creek.

The panel heard concerns from the existing towns about economic and housing competition from a new town. During the likely predevelopment period, the existing towns will continue to grow toward buildout and avoid this competition. Large-scale development, by its nature, is a long-term process and patience is necessary.
The Spring Creek Ranch consists of 2,809 acres in south-central Idaho, in the unincorporated area of Blaine County. Specifically, the site has frontage on State Highways 20 and 75. The boundaries of the ranch property are depicted in the illustration on page 8 showing proposed land uses. The site features a diverse mix of physical characteristics. Portions of the site are actively irrigated and farmed. An extensive natural riparian corridor exists along the Big Wood River and a tributary stream paralleling Highway 20. Much of the site is rolling, natural sagebrush on a series of knolls. These knolls define the development site, which totals approximately 650 to 800 acres. This development area forms a bowl that slopes toward a central drainage course flowing from east to west. Portions of the ranch that will not be converted to developed uses will be permanently protected using conservation easements or other appropriate mechanisms.

Site Attributes

Understanding the opportunities and attributes of the Spring Creek site in terms of its capabilities for supporting and complementing the needs of a new town or community is an important step in determining its suitability. This understanding takes into account the site’s human, emotional, and experiential qualities as well as its physical and contextual aspects and its setting, its relationship to its surroundings in the larger setting, and how it is experienced on the site and in the site surrounds.

The following section describes a number of key aspects and highlights that make the Spring Creek site an appropriate, distinctive, and attractive option for receiving urban development, in particular a place-making opportunity that represents all of the best qualities of a new town. When compared to the effects of sensitive infill within cities and continuing expansion into surrounding secondary valleys, onto hillsides, and in annexed areas of existing cities, a new town development can be an attractive regional option for city building in the valley by potentially reducing those impacts.

Guiding Principles for a New Town at Spring Creek

The following eight principles should be applied to the development of Spring Creek, specifically, as well as adapted for other new towns in the county.

Build on the Site’s Sense of Place, Spirit, and Identity

The planning and design of a new town must respect and build on the particular sense of place and locality of the site in order to establish its identity. The central irrigated platform of the Spring Creek site, defined on three edges by hills and mountain ridges, provides a dramatic and memorable opportunity for creating an identifiable place and setting for a new community. The sense of enclosure offered by these hills is enhanced by the spatial opening to the northwest toward distant views of the snow-covered peaks of Soldier Mountain and “The Three Pigs” Peaks.
The design of the town’s central open-space spine, or corridor, along the line of an existing drainage course can reinforce this significant site experience and create enhanced value and identity for the site. Together, this spine, which defines the view to the “beyond,” and the location of the town center at its culmination reinforce the opportunity for creating a distinctive and powerful place-making town identity in Spring Creek.

The site’s internal bowl form increases the level of consciousness of what can be seen above and beyond—the cloudscape, night sky, and starscape as well as the hills beyond as seen between mountain peaks. The Timmerman Hills on the north edge of the bowl provide a distinctive backdrop. Three peaks and the valleys between them form windows to the hills and sky beyond. The central hill form has a distinctive rock crown that is a unique site feature that must be acknowledged in the design of the town’s open spaces and internal view corridors.

Create a Vibrant and Economically Viable Community Heart and Gathering Place

A town requires a community heart and central gathering place that is the identifiable visual and social focus. The Spring Creek site offers a special opportunity to connect that symbolic heart of the town with the larger landscape, making the surrounding vistas and vibrant community life a part of daily life. Open space can be organized around long-distance views to dramatic mountains to the north and west. It also provides an opportunity to position the Spring Creek town center in a location that builds on the visibility of its highway location with the primary entry on Highway 75. Together these two opportunities could create a town center that is strategically and experientially connected to both the landscape and human activity.

A town square, located at the terminus of a linear open-space spine, will provide a community focus for the entire town. Locating the town’s mixed-use center around this square capitalizes on the regional movement patterns and directs all resident traffic through its Main Street, thereby creating a focus of human activity and commercial vibrancy.
Design for Transit-Oriented Densities and Land Uses

In view of the existing and projected traffic congestion on Highway 75, the development of Spring Creek must build on all opportunities for expanding movement options from the site into the valley. Reduction of automobile use should be a key objective during the early stages of planning and building. Such options include building dedicated bikeways and trails, extending existing transit infrastructure to and through the site, providing a park-and-ride facility, and locating a carpooling station in a convenient location.

With the potential of a new airport south of the site and the considerable commuter traffic moving northward on the 75 corridor, a regional transit system, such as bus rapid transit on dedicated bus lanes, can reduce car traffic in the corridor. Together with a potential park-and-ride facility on the edge of its town center and an intercommunity transit link, these services could make living in the Spring Creek community with limited automobile use a reality. In addition, looping this transit link along a higher-density residential spine through the site may be feasible. Each Spring Creek resident could then walk to a transit stop within five minutes. This loop would also bring outside traffic activity through the retail center.

An effective way of promoting transit use is to incorporate land uses supporting special transit in the development program. This opportunity exists at Spring Creek and could include the integration of a major community-learning facility, a wellness/health center, or a similar use. Such facilities would also provide an alternative activity focus for the community and an economic driver.

The airport relocation site, just south of Spring Creek, presents the opportunity to develop within the new town without contributing to valley traffic congestion. Depending on the product mix delivered at Spring Creek, facilities could provide employment, thus reducing traffic on the northern portion of Highway 75. Park-and-ride facilities could further reduce regional traffic. Two entry points from the highway to the town would allow a continuous bus route link from the airport to the valley through the town and vice versa.
Maximize Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity to the Valley and through the Site

Although the Spring Creek site is part of the pattern of linear communities along the valley, it is separated from the city of Bellevue by several miles. The existing bikeway and pedestrian trail spine of some 20 miles, which connects the northern cities of the valley, offers the opportunity to expand and connect the Spring Creek site as an integral part of that existing linear pattern. Starting with a clean slate, Spring Creek can be designed to optimize pedestrian and bicycle use both within the community and outside. This opportunity includes creating a finely woven network of intown bike and pedestrian trails and properly scaled and designed streets.

The panel recommends bike lanes, wide sidewalks and paths, and tree-lined streets. Bike trails and pedestrian paths in Bellevue could be extended to Spring Creek along the Highway 75 corridor and potentially along the Wood River corridor, offering a multitude of movement options for both recreational and commuting purposes.

Integrate Diverse Density with Site Form

The antithesis of sprawl is compact development with clearly defined and permanently protected edges. Achieving higher densities of residential development results in a compact footprint and thereby limits the effects of sprawl. The significant size and consolidated ownership of the entire Spring Creek town site allows the control of density and built form to create comfortable and neighborly interfaces—a major issue that is difficult to address within infill sites of existing cities.

The central bowl section of the Spring Creek site is focused around a drainage course and open-space spine. The edges of this “valley” slope gently upward toward the surrounding hillsides. This topography presents the opportunity to integrate higher-density uses along this central open-space amenity and progressively transition medium- to lower-density housing forms onto the upper slopes overlooking the valley floor. These side valley slopes would allow views over the town center and to the hills beyond.
Protect and Enhance Scenic Valley Viewsheds

The hills that embrace and encircle the town footprint also play an important role as a visual buffer from Highway 20 to the north and much of Highway 75. In effect, they make the development invisible from those major corridors.

The protection of the rural setting and experience is of paramount importance to the residents of the existing valley cities. The approach to the Spring Creek site from Highway 75 is one that offers a dramatic arrival experience. While the Timmerman Hills provide a visual barrier on approach from both north and south, the highway cuts through these hills in a narrow gap, thereby revealing the town form in a limited portion where the bowl form of the valley opens to the north and west.

The experience of town form and presence is one that is inherent to the setting of the existing cities in the valley where the highway passes through each city consecutively. In the case of Spring Creek, the experience of the town center located along the highway edge is that of passing by and experiencing its form and profile without the inherent traffic effects of the highway on its pedestrian amenity. Traditional hill and valley towns throughout the world have built on the principle of revealing their presence and character in powerful ways without allowing major traffic routes to destroy their environment. This opportunity is an achievable objective on the Spring Creek site.

Connect with the Countryside and Nature

The essence of development in the valley has been that of discrete towns or cities surrounded by open space, and rural and agricultural lands. Over time this clearly defined relationship has eroded as the towns have expanded into the surrounding valley.

A sense of connection with the rural countryside is important in respecting the development pattern in the valley. The Spring Creek site, by virtue of its self-containment, surrounded by conservation lands and steep topography and riparian ways, can build on these connections.

Future Spring Creek residents will live in a small town set into an infinite landscape of thousands of acres where links to trails, wildlife, and native vegetation create a sense of connectedness with the
site and make it compatible with community values for preserving the rural setting. These connections will be accomplished and reinforced on three levels: visual, contextual, and functional.

**Create Strongly Defined Community Boundaries and a Compact Footprint**

The challenges of sprawl—its undifferentiated development, consumption of important natural resources, lack of community diversity, and economic homogeneity—can often be addressed effectively by limiting the development footprint into a compact pattern. Implicit in this form of community development is the need to provide for a broader variety of residential typologies.

Higher densities and narrower streets can significantly reduce effects on the natural environment and create a pedestrian-friendly and neighborly living experience.

The Spring Creek site has all of the characteristics that would allow it to achieve a limited, compact footprint. The steep hillside slopes to the north and west, rural conservation areas to the south, the Spring Creek Valley and riparian corridor to the north, and the Highway 75 corridor to the east all result in a finite community footprint that can never be expanded or extended beyond those limits. All these elements lead to a more pedestrian-friendly and neighborly living experience.
Creating a new community on the Spring Creek site will require developing significant infrastructure systems. This section discusses the infrastructure considerations for a new town.

**Wet Utilities**

To serve the community, a water and sanitary sewer district will be established to build, operate, and maintain water and sanitary sewer facilities. An extensive study is needed to analyze the various service strategies for addressing water and wastewater needs in the community. The study will reveal the cost-effectiveness of various approaches. The size of the development will determine the practicality of the studied options. In that analysis, recognizing the interplay between various types and sources of water is important.

For example, landscape irrigation can use non-potable water. In a large development, treating water to a potable standard for landscaping purposes is not cost-effective; running dual water distribution systems (potable and nonpotable) through the community is cheaper than bearing the cost of treatment to satisfy the total water demand. However, because the size of one of the distribution systems is controlled largely by firefighting water demand, the duplicative cost of the second water distribution system may not be offset by the cost savings of downsizing the water treatment plant. In that case, the decision regarding separation of the two water systems should then consider the operation and maintenance costs of both approaches and the overall goals of the community. Are the environmental benefits of separating the systems of sufficient value to offset the difference in cost? Some of the considerations and strategies that should be examined in a water and wastewater infrastructure service study are discussed in the following sections.

**Domestic Water Supply, Treatment, and Distribution**

At this time, the mix of land uses and extent of development in the new town is unknown. Generally speaking, residential uses are traditionally considered as demanding approximately 150 gallons per day (gpd) of water per person. That demand considers both domestic water needs and landscape irrigation needs traditionally associated with development. Actual water use is often considerably less than this 150-gallon estimate. Nonresidential uses vary in their water demands.

Water conservation should be emphasized in this new town proposal. Appropriate water conservation techniques include using low-flow fixtures and appliances in buildings, using native and drought-tolerant planting materials for landscapes, and implementing water reuse opportunities. Conservation techniques can easily reduce traditional water demand by 20 percent. If the project is more aggressive in its goals and approaches, it should be able to reduce traditional water demand by as much as 50 percent.

For discussion purposes, the panel assumed the new town would include approximately 1,000 dwelling units with a mix of densities and housing types. In addition, the project would likely include employment, retail, institutional, and open space uses. A sample water demand chart (figure 3) is included to provide an idea of the amount of water rights that might be needed for a project of this magnitude.

In addition to the land uses shown in the sample chart, the community might include approximately 30 acres of irrigated open space for active recreation. Each acre of irrigated open space will require approximately 1.1 million gallons of water per acre per year, representing a total annual demand of 33 million gallons.
The Spring Creek Ranch has a combination of surface water rights and groundwater rights. The Idaho state courts are currently reviewing water rights within the Wood River Basin. The rights held by the Spring Creek Ranch are very senior. Nonetheless, the court decision may reduce the surface rights allocations currently used on the property. The water rights assigned to the ranch are still being clarified, but perhaps as much as 90 million gallons of surface water rights are available. These rights are supplemented by available groundwater rights.

Water rights used for agricultural irrigation purposes are used only seasonally. Water required to serve a community demands a reliable, year-round supply of water. Ideally, water would be diverted from the Big Wood River for use within the community. Such diversions likely will be limited to some percentage of available flow. That limitation may cause a need for seasonal storage of raw water or for supplementing surface water supplies with groundwater rights.

A new water treatment plant will need to be constructed on site to satisfy potable water needs. Raw water could be used for landscape purposes and fire fighting. If raw water is used for either or both of those purposes, treatment and storage requirements for potable water supply will be significantly reduced, but dual water distribution systems will be required—one for potable water and one for raw water. The total water demand for the community will determine whether this approach is cost-effective.

Given the relatively minor changes in elevation anticipated within the development area, only one pressure zone is anticipated to be required to serve the new town. Water will need to be stored at a sufficient elevation to pressurize the distribution system. The placement of both the treatment plant and the storage facility are critical decisions.

Water storage needs are typically calculated as the largest of fire-fighting demand, maximum peak-day demand, and emergency supply (typically two days at average daily demand). Study of the potential locations for water supply storage for the system should consider service needs, environmental effects, aesthetics, and costs (including pumping).

**Sanitary Sewer Collection and Treatment**

Traditionally, sanitary sewer demand is considered to be approximately 80 percent of water demand. This estimate is very conservative in terms of sizing wastewater facilities, which in reality often generate a far lower percentage of total water usage. Still, for the purposes of this discussion, 80 percent of total water demand was used. Therefore, using the sample water demand analysis provided, wastewater treatment demand could be in the range of 0.57 to 0.36 million gallons per day.

A new wastewater treatment plant will be needed to provide this service. The treatment approach to use at the plant and the level to which to treat effluent should be carefully studied in light of the overall goals of the community, overall wastewater generation, and potential disposal options.

### Figure 3
**Hypothetical Water Demand at Spring Creek**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Traditional Demand</th>
<th>20% Reduction</th>
<th>50% Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1,000 dwelling units</td>
<td>330,000 gpd</td>
<td>264,000 gpd</td>
<td>165,000 gpd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 persons per unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Retail</td>
<td>70 acres</td>
<td>175,000 gpd</td>
<td>140,000 gpd</td>
<td>87,500 gpd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,500 gpd/acre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>20 acres</td>
<td>60,000 gpd</td>
<td>48,000 gpd</td>
<td>30,000 gpd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,000 gpd/acre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>565,000 gpd</strong></td>
<td><strong>452,000 gpd</strong></td>
<td><strong>282,500 gpd</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treated wastewater effluent is a potential and environmentally conscientious source of nonpotable water. If wastewater is treated to a tertiary level, the effluent could be used to irrigate public open space within the community. It would likely need to be supplemented by raw water supplies depending on the availability of treated effluent and the demand for irrigation water. Recycling treated wastewater for landscape irrigation can be consistent with sustainability goals if the energy demands for pumping the water are not excessive.

If treated wastewater is not used for landscape irrigation, it may only need to be treated to a secondary level. At this treatment level, disposal options include direct discharge into certain classes of streams and land disposal onto crops not intended for human consumption. Alfalfa is an excellent choice of potential crops. With direct stream discharge, both the quality of the effluent and the temperature of the release water need to be matched to the receiving waters.

The desirability of various disposal methods will be influenced by the associated storage needs of the treated effluent. If land application is selected (either onto landscape areas or agricultural areas), the effluent can be used only seasonally. During the remainder of the year, treated effluent would need to be disposed of by an alternative method or stored. If direct release into a stream is selected (either directly from a mechanical plant or following treatment in constructed wetlands), release rates may be influenced by the available natural flow in the stream channel. If natural flows are minimal, either the quality of the release water will need to be increased, or the rate of release reduced, which could create a need for seasonal storage.

Created wetlands can be used as part of the treatment train for wastewater as long as human contact can be strictly avoided. Created wetlands can be an appropriate buffer for natural wetlands and can actually enhance the overall health of the wetlands ecosystem.

Other considerations for the type of wastewater treatment selected include the methods of disinfection and sludge disposal, the capital cost of the facility, operation and maintenance costs (including energy demands), sustainability goals for the community, and phasing options. All of these considerations are significantly influenced by the quantity of wastewater generated by the community.

In terms of wastewater collection system design, Spring Creek master developers should consider the use of a small-diameter, pressurized system in lieu of the more traditional large-diameter gravity pipe collection approach. The former can be less expensive to install and uses fewer resources because of the reduced pipe sizes. Another example of the kind of sustainable design choice that should be considered with sanitary sewers (and all wet utilities) is using native backfill material in trenches instead of using imported backfill. Again, depending on soil conditions, this alternative can save construction costs and reduce the use of natural resources.

**Storm Drainage**

Currently in the Wood River Valley, storm drainage runoff is not typically considered a major design consideration for most developments. However, in a new town setting, existing drainage patterns can be significantly altered by the overall size of the development footprint and the intensity of the development area core. At buildout, the amount of impervious surface coverage within the new town could be significant enough to change the natural drainage pattern. These changes could alter the rate of stormwater runoff, the total volume of runoff, and the water quality of the runoff. Potential effects and suitable mitigations should be studied during the design of the new town master plan.

Generally speaking, stormwater design concepts that strive to keep the water where it falls are best. More information is needed about the soil characteristics on the site, but the soils appear to promote infiltration, creating minimal runoff. When pavement and rooftops cover portions of the site, natural infiltration will be reduced. The first step in successfully managing stormwater will be limiting the amount of impervious surface on a site, while still achieving the development goals of the new town concept. Narrowing standard street sections, encouraging shared parking, providing appropriate parking ratios for proposed...
land uses, and encouraging building configurations that go up rather than spread out are all strategies for reducing the amount of impervious coverage in the new town. Substituting porous pavements for traditional asphalt and concrete reduces runoff. Porous pavements that should be considered include compacted gravel, interlocking pavers, grasscrete, and porous asphalt and concrete. Green roofs also reduce stormwater runoff when used instead of traditional roofs.

Managing runoff after it is generated is the next challenge. Extending the time of concentration for stormwater flows can often reduce the peak flow rate. Reducing peak flows allows the whole storm drainage system to be downsized, saving money and resources. Extending the time of concentration can have other benefits as well. If stormwater is allowed to form shallow pools, particulate matter has a chance to drop out and settle; the water that continues downstream is cleaner.

Conveying stormwater in open channels rather than in pipes creates the opportunity for multiple benefits. First, channels are cheaper to build than piped systems. Second, best management practices can be designed into the channel to improve water quality. Last, and perhaps most important, open-channel drainage systems can be designed in ways that are attractive to both people and wildlife. The existing central drainage feature through the center of the development site represents a significant opportunity to incorporate a naturalized swale amenity through the heart of the community that can create substantial drainage and water-quality benefits.

**Dry Utilities**

Dry utilities include electrical service, telephone, internet access, cable television, and in some communities, natural gas. The developers will need to work closely with these service providers to ensure that adequate facilities are provided for the
Communication services of the highest available quality will be particularly important if progressive employers and residents are to be attracted to the community. For example, high-speed, triple-play, and fiber-optic facilities are the current state of the art and must be available in the community.

**Transportation Infrastructure**

The new town must have a well-planned and efficient transportation system. Congestion breeds frustration and discontent. It also negatively affects air quality, noise, and energy consumption. The new town should develop strategies to reduce vehicle trips that include ways to both eliminate vehicular trips and reduce trip length. Some of the techniques that can achieve these goals are to offer a compatible mix of uses within the community, colocate uses in a fine-grained pattern, provide safe and convenient alternatives to vehicular travel, and plan for technological advances in transportation.

The master plan for the new town should address the air quality and resource consumption issues associated with transportation. For example, the new town should investigate the use of rubberized asphalt. This paving material reduces noise, extends pavement life, and creates a use for discarded tires. Second, encouraging (or requiring), through development standards, the availability of alternative fuels could provide a regional benefit. Street-lighting standards should protect night sky conditions for wildlife protection and energy conservation reasons as well as preserving the rural character of Blaine County.

The new town should be designed for vehicular access only from Highway 75. Extending the vehicular transportation network across the ridgeline to Highway 20 could create significant aesthetic impacts, interfere with wildlife migration routes, and damage the riparian resources along Highway 20.

Standard street sections should be developed for use within the community. They should balance safety and convenience considerations with the benefits of reducing resource consumption, managing construction and maintenance costs, creating walkable neighborhoods, and reducing the development footprint.

The transportation network should be developed with thoughtful attention to bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Plans should address both recreational and commuter needs.

Given the size of the planned new town, the opportunity to develop transportation system management services through a homeowners association or similar entity should be explored. These services might include programs such as ridesharing or carpooling organization services, or management of a car-sharing program.

The viability of providing transit service in the new community will be enhanced if the airport is relocated to the south. Planning for the availability of transit service should be coordinated regionally and involve plans for the airport.

**Phasing of the Development**

Phasing any large development project is complex. Typically the goal is to identify a “doable” first phase that can be accomplished using extensions of existing infrastructure and minimizing up-front costs. That strategy will not be possible with this new town proposal. The first phase of this project must include a significant amenities package to create a sense of place and forge strong linkages to other valley communities. In addition, major infrastructure investments will have to be made to provide services to the first occupants of the new community.

Subsequent phases of the development can be defined in response to logical extensions of infrastructure and market forces.
Although much positive work has been recently accomplished, such as initiating a TDR policy, completing Blaine County 2025, adopting inclusionary zoning, and paying attention to affordable housing needs, further efforts are needed to better determine the desirability and location of any new town development.

The panel recommends the following action items to advance the decision regarding a new town at Spring Creek. The panel emphasizes that new town development needs to be a joint private/public effort (developer, county, and regional cities), and these tasks need to be addressed on a collaborative basis in the coming years.

- Design a regional economic development strategy to serve as the basis for formulating growth policy. Such a strategy must address job creation and retention, economic sustainability, and employment needs in both the public and private sectors.
- Define an affordable-housing plan and program that will address both needs and solutions based upon current data and verifiable experiences.
- Develop a detailed regional open-space plan as a framework for land use policy that defines the locations of new development, transportation connections, and the like.
- Adopt a regional transportation plan, which is essential to any new town decision, that considers both nonvehicular modes and public transit.
- Refine TDR strategies and policies to better identify receiving areas, create a TDR market mechanism, and establish monitoring systems.
- Formulate detailed planning criteria for determining both the need for a new town and the location of such a town.
- Conduct a more extensive feasibility study for this site (market analysis, transportation studies, environmental assessments) that addresses in greater detail the constraints and consequences of the developer’s proposed development concepts.

The panel believes that the concept of a new town in Blaine County is progressive and warranted. By continuing to be proactive in addressing growth issues—and growth is going to occur—the county can maintain its high quality of life and its private partners can realize their development goals.

Conclusion

The Wood River is a natural asset that the county is working hard to preserve.
James M. DeFrancia

Panel Chair
Aspen, Colorado

DeFrancia is a principal of Lowe Enterprises, Inc., a national real estate development company engaged in residential, commercial, and resort development, and president of its community development division. He has been involved in real estate development for more than 25 years; prior to that, he served as an officer in the U.S. Navy. DeFrancia is a trustee of the Urban Land Institute, a member of the Northern Virginia Building Industries Association, past national director of the National Association of Home Builders, a former Virginia representative to the Southern Growth Policies Boards, and a former member of the board of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. He has been a guest lecturer or panelist for the Bank Lending Institute; the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University; George Mason University; and George Washington University.

DeFrancia is a 1963 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, with postgraduate studies in business and finance at the University of Michigan.

James Heid

San Francisco, California

Heid is president and founder of Urban Green, LLC. Begun in 2000, UrbanGreen provides advisory services and techniques for successful regional, new community, and urban infill development, while also taking on select development assignments as a partner or principal.

In more than 20 years of practice, Heid has established startup offices and led multinational design practices. He was formerly chief operating officer and senior vice president with EDAW (1994–2000) and a principal with Design Workshop (1987–1993). He has led award-winning projects in urban revitalization, new community, and high-end resort development throughout the world.

Nationally recognized as an articulate advocate for environmentally responsible land development, Heid focuses on what he terms “common sense sustainability.” With a keen ability to distill complex design ideas into easily grasped techniques, his current assignments include the following: visioning and development advisory services for a 300-unit affordable housing, urban infill, traditional neighborhood as a catalyst for revitalization of West Jackson, Mississippi; development advisory services, including visioning, team management, and green development techniques, for a 1,000-unit affordable housing neighborhood on the former Fort Ord base on the Monterey Peninsula, California; development concepts, environmental and cultural resource easement strategies, and entitlement processing for a 14,000-acre conservation community on the California coast; managing director of development for a 2,000-acre, $250 million resort community located in southeast Arizona; and research and author for the ULI publication Greenfield Development without Sprawl: The Role of Planned Communities.

Heid holds a master’s of real estate development from MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a bachelor’s of landscape architecture from the University of Idaho. He is a member of the Urban Land Institute and is regularly featured as a speaker at annual meetings and conferences, such as the Symposium on Sustainability sponsored by the Heinz Foundation and ULI’s annual Golf Course Community Forum. In 1999 he was selected to instruct the ULI/Conservation Fund’s workshop in Environmentally Sensitive Development, a role he continues as the program enters its fifth year of national workshops. In 2003 he
taught the ULI’s Advanced Residential Development School in San Francisco and in 2004 presented at the Annual Partners for Smart Growth conference in Portland, Oregon.

Linda Hoffmann

Fort Collins, Colorado

Hoffmann is a principal at Nolte Associates, Inc., a civil engineering, surveying, and planning company of approximately 420 employees. She has worked for Nolte for 20 years and currently serves as the director of the Fort Collins, Colorado, office. She holds a bachelor’s of landscape architecture from Kansas State University. Hoffmann has spent most of her professional career in the planning arena working in land development and heading public-involvement programs for large public infrastructure projects. She has led master-planning efforts for many large, mixed-use projects and has directly overseen the civil engineering infrastructure planning efforts on projects ranging in size from 50 acres to well over 5,000 acres.

Hoffmann is an Associate Member of ULI and serves on the Explorer Committee for the Colorado District Council. She serves as lead contact for Nolte’s corporate membership to the United States Green Building Council. She is LEED® accredited and is a member of Nolte’s core strategy group for sustainable design. Hoffman is a trustee for the High Plains Environmental Foundation in Loveland, Colorado, and previously served as an adjunct professor in the Landscape Architecture program at the University of California at Davis, where she taught studio design courses to juniors and seniors.

Joseph Hruda

Vancouver, Canada

Hruda is founder and president of CIVITAS Urban Design & Planning, Inc., and principal of CIVITAS Architecture, Inc., a multidisciplinary urban design and planning consulting practice. He is a Harvard University master of architecture graduate, and a Gold Medalist recipient from the University of Manitoba.

Hruda has more than 25 years of recognized design achievement in new sustainable community and mixed-use projects. His firm’s clients are private and governmental, domestic and international. His firm’s projects are located in various cities in Canada, the United States, China, Australia, and Southeast Asia. He has lived for varying periods in Boston, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Sydney.

In Vancouver, Hruda was responsible for planning and urban design of the Coal Harbour project on the Downtown Waterfront and the Granville Slopes neighborhood plan in False Creek. Elsewhere, he was responsible for the urban design of the Rouse Hill Town Centre Master Plan, a major transit-oriented, mixed-use town center in Sydney, Australia, and the Galisteo Basin Village in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a compact, sustainable new community. Recently, he was responsible for the urban design and planning of the Charleston Square Town Centre Master Plan, a redevelopment of an existing regional retail center in Sydney; the Liangzhu New Town for 50,000 people, which includes a major cultural tourism component; and the Festival Place Town Centre in Hangzhou, China.

Hruda’s community involvement includes a six-year appointment to the city of Vancouver Urban Design Panel, the city’s Council appointment advisory group, including one year as chairman of the panel. He is currently a member of the Urban Design Review Panel for the state-owned real estate development corporation, Landcom, in Sydney.

Rachelle L. Levitt

Washington, D.C.

Levitt is a city planner and currently oversees and directs the real estate practice and land use policy activities of the Urban Land Institute as executive vice president. In that capacity, she manages a total program budget of over $15 million. She works with staff and ULI members on planning, designing, and implementing the research, educational programs, advisory services, awards, and competitions of ULI. These programs include handbooks, topical publications, tool kits, conferences, workshops, and real estate and urban
policy research, whose findings are ultimately published. She also serves as publisher of ULI’s books and magazines (approximately 20 books per year), which includes the editing, design, and printing of those publications.

Levitt has been responsible for the research and completion of numerous publications on real estate development and land use planning, including retail, office, industrial, and residential development and such policy issues as smart growth, urban revitalization, and housing. She has written on the subjects of city revitalization, research parks, public/private partnerships, commercial development, and real estate trends.

She has been instrumental in the expansion of ULI into Europe and has organized ULI’s European Real Estate Finance, Development, and Investment Conference and its other conferences in Europe. Levitt has also developed the curriculum for ULI’s real estate workshops and real estate school. Furthermore, she has managed the ULI program that includes comprehensive real estate research, handbook development, publishing, conference program development, real estate financial information, primary data collection, and advisory services to communities and private businesses on solving land use and development problems. Most recently, Levitt has been leading ULI’s efforts on improving the development patterns in fringe suburban communities and will be starting a new initiative on infrastructure finance.

Mary J. Roberts
Littleton, Colorado

Roberts hold a master’s in urban planning degree from the University of Colorado at Denver, a master’s in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, and a bachelor’s degree from Illinois State University. Although most of Roberts’ experience is in the public sector, she has also worked for private consulting firms and in the nonprofit setting. Her experience ranges from managing programs aimed at enabling elderly homeowners to stay in their homes to preparing comprehensive plans for small towns to providing affordable housing in super-inflated markets. She has worked for large and small cities, such as the city of Denver and the city of Aspen. In addition, she has experience in historic preservation, specific area planning, and strategic planning.

Roberts is currently the community development director for the city of Littleton, a suburb of Denver with a population of 47,000. She manages a department of 17 and has been with the city since October 2002. Her accomplishments to date include enacting a downtown historic district, embarking on an update to the city’s 25-year-old comprehensive plan, successfully rezoning one of the city’s largest remaining undeveloped parcels to accommodate mixed-use development, and coordinating with the city’s housing authority to provide appropriate affordable housing throughout the city.

While with the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, Roberts undertook the agency’s first strategic planning effort since its inception. While working in her own planning consulting firm, Roberts created a set of affordable housing policies for Pitkin County, Colorado.

Stan Zemler
Vail, Colorado

Zemler signed on to become Vail’s town manager in October 2003 and is best known for his strong leadership skills as a consensus builder. He brings 20 years of local leadership experience, having served as president and chief executive officer of the Boulder Chamber of Commerce before arriving in Vail. Zemler’s current focus is to help guide Vail’s expansive redevelopment, which includes public and private investments of more than $1 billion over the next four years. He also has been instrumental in organizing a regional transportation coalition to address congestion and other impacts along Interstate 70. The coalition includes representation from 27 cities and counties with the aim of developing a regionally preferred transportation plan with locally accepted solutions.

As Vail’s town manager, Zemler oversees a budget of $42 million and approximately 200 full-time employees. Direct reports include the assistant town manager, community information officer, fire chief,
police chief, community development director, public works and transportation director, finance director, information systems director, and human resources director.

Before his appointment at the Boulder Chamber in 1997, Zemler served as acting city manager for the city of Boulder during a transition period in which he helped the city council work through a challenging budget, resulting in cuts of $1.5 million. He served as deputy city manager for Boulder for five years and was the executive director of the Boulder Urban Renewal Authority from 1995 to 1997, where he facilitated attempts to redevelop an aging shopping mall and orchestrated development of an urban renewal plan in which tax increment financing is being used for a hotel project currently under construction. He became director of the Office of Environmental Affairs for Policy and Program Development for the city of Boulder in 1985. He also was an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado College of Environmental Design from 1984 to 1992.

Zemler holds a bachelor’s degree in geography from the University of Colorado at Boulder and an associate’s degree in environmental studies from the College of Marin in California.