



Linen District Cultural Concept Plan

Capital City Development Corporation
October, 2010

cover: American Linen Supply building, built in 1910.

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The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan is an idea book and planning tool for implementing arts and culture infrastructure investments in the Linen District in Boise’s western downtown. Any investment would be guided by the Downtown Boise Arts & Culture Plan, the master plans for the Westside and River Myrtle–Old Boise urban renewal districts, and the city’s comprehensive plan.



“Building vitality in Boise’s downtown.”

Capital City Development Corp. is the redevelopment agency for Boise, Idaho. For more information about CCDC’s cultural investments, visit www.ccdcboise.com or call 208-384-4264.

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Definition of the Linen District

Boundaries

The Linen District is six square blocks bounded by Main and Front Streets between 13th and 16th streets. The district is located within two of Capital City Development Corporation's urban renewal districts, Westside and River Myrtle–Old Boise.

At the area's southwest corner is the Rhodes Skate Park and Boise Fire Department Station 5 at 16th and Front streets; at the northwest corner, Baldwin Lock and Key and the Sav-on Cafe; at the northeast corner, the Modern Hotel and Bar; and at the southeast corner, the Metro Express Car Wash.

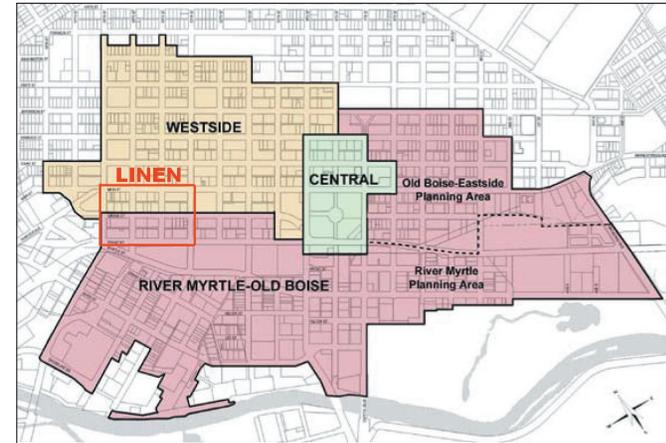
History

The district lies just west of the center of the city; most of the existing buildings in the area were built between 1910 and 1950, primarily for light industrial services and distribution. The idea of the Linen District redevelopment is David Hale's. The name comes from the area's most physically prominent building, formerly the American Linen Company, built in 1910.

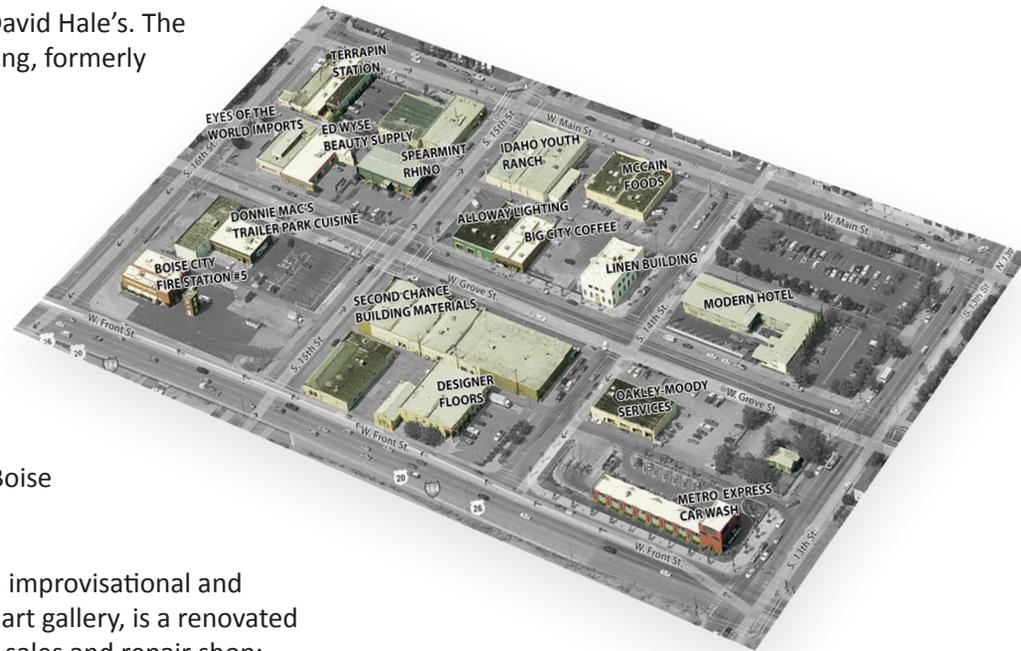
Character

The character of the Linen District is primarily defined by the single story brick buildings facing Grove Street between 15th and 14th streets. These small scale, repurposed buildings mostly have original or slightly modified 1940's era facades. The district retains several long-lived businesses: Oakley Moody Services, a vehicle repair business; Alloway Electric, an electrical fixture supply and contractor services company; Baldwin Lock and Key and the Sav-on Cafe. All are Boise businesses located in the area for decades.

Repurposed and modestly updated buildings lend the area an improvisational and authentic character. The Linen Building, an events center and art gallery, is a renovated commercial laundry; Donnie Mac's Restaurant is a former tire sales and repair shop; and Idaho Youth Ranch was formerly a car parts and repair shop.



CCDC District Map. Six-block Linen District in red.



Map of Linen District six square block area, 2010, courtesy of CCDC.

Current Uses and Significant Public Spaces

The center of the Linen District is the district namesake, the Linen Building at 14th and Grove. The Linen Building was built in 1910 as a geothermal commercial laundry; it now houses an events center, art gallery and the offices of David Hale, progenitor and developer of the Linen District.

Across 14th Street from the Linen Building is the Modern Hotel and Bar, a boutique hotel, restaurant and bar. A renovated '60s era motel, The Modern has positioned itself as a destination for local and visiting filmmakers, writers, musicians and visual artists. Furthermore, the hotel hosts Modern Art, an annual event of local artists temporarily occupying and transforming rooms, courtyard patio and parking lot into an art festival drawing thousands of visitors in a single evening.

Big City Coffee and Donnie Mac's are two restaurants in the area that provide sidewalk style patios. These two businesses are instrumental in providing activity and interest to Grove Street and contributing to its pedestrian quality. The Modern Hotel also provides a patio just off of the street.

The Rhodes Skate Park is the primary open public space for the district; it is located just off the southwest corner of the district.

The six square-block Linen District has three primary vehicular entrances: From the west, 16th and Grove; from the north, 14th and Main; and from the east, 13th and Grove. Each entrance leads to Grove Street, an increasingly significant secondary east-west pedestrian street.



The Modern Hotel with the Linen Building in background. Photograph courtesy of Modern Hotel.



Grove Street public art with Big City Coffee sidewalk patio in background. Photographs courtesy of author except as noted.

Existing Cultural Infrastructure

Linen District website - www.linendistrict.com

The Modern Hotel website - www.themodernhotel.com

Gallery at Linen Building

Event space at Linen Building

Sunday Market at Linen Building

Murals at Linen Building

Digital billboard at Metro Carwash

Temporary Art Panels at Linen Parking Lot

Mural at Donnie Mac's Restaurant

Musical performance at Terrapin Station

Dance performance at Spearmint Rhino

Rhodes Skate Park

Musical performances at the Modern Hotel

Modern Art annual event at the Modern Hotel

Film and music artists and art scholarship at the Modern Hotel



Modern Art - An annual visual and performing arts event at the Modern Hotel. Photograph courtesy of Modern Hotel.



Skateboarder at Rhodes Skate Park. Photograph courtesy of BoiseDailyPhoto.com.

Cultural Planning Toward Ideal Development

While urban planning is outside the scope of this document, a few issues can be touched upon here. The character and scale of future developments on Grove Street are understood to be critical to stakeholders of the Linen District. Grove Street, an east-west, pedestrian-scaled two-way street in downtown Boise, is the physical and programmatic center of the Linen District.

Providing a two-way corridor from S. 9th Street to Fairview Avenue, Grove Street is positioned to become a significant east-west downtown corridor. Large, undeveloped parcels just to the east of the Linen District are likely players in significant, near-future downtown development.

The Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan, written before the Linen District initiated development, includes two observations of the area that this plan suggests re-evaluating.

The Linen District has begun to develop a cohesive, unique character. While the Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan is correct in its observation that the Westside suffers from “discontinuity” and that many “parcels are more valuable than the improvements on them,” assumptions of value, scale and continuity should be tailored with a careful assessment of the recent developments in the Linen District.

Small-scale parcels and existing frontages facing onto Grove Street are ideal for local, independent retailers and service providers. The Linen District accommodates longtime Boise businesses, such as Alloway Electric, the Sav-on Cafe and Idaho Youth Ranch, as well as relatively young businesses like Donnie Mac’s and the Modern Hotel. The area is still inexpensive enough to accommodate new, local ideas for services and goods – an ideal counterpart to the WaterCooler business incubator just one block north.

The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan anticipates small-scale, single lot or ¼-block development and existing building renovations for the foreseeable future. Small-scale infill, and repurposing and renovation of the existing building stock, are the likely strategies for the district. Larger scale, full-block or multiblock developments are perhaps more likely along Grove between 13th and 9th streets.

The Westside Downtown Framework Master Plan indicates the possible closure of 14th Street from Bannock to Grove in order to create a significant open space for the Westside District. While the Linen District appreciates the idea of additional open urban space in the area, stakeholders and the Linen District Cultural Concept Plan suggest the closure of 14th Street may not be the most effective strategy for the area. The grain of existing building frontage is emphatically oriented to east-west pedestrian streets in this area. The Linen District has taken full advantage of this orientation and anticipates continuing it. A north-south street closure as originally suggested may result in open space that is not well activated.

Boise City and its Department of Arts and History could also assist in the continuing growth of the Linen District’s cultural assets and infrastructure. The Linen District is a potential critical link between the new 30th Street Area and the Grove Plaza. Boise City could assist in coordinating public and private interests as well as funding lines for future projects.

The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends future planning efforts to address Grove Street as an opportunity toward the continued and future development of a significant secondary pedestrian street. Grove Street provides opportunities to more effectively link the Linen District to the rest of the city: west to 16th Street, Fairview Avenue and the 30th Street Area; east to 9th Street, the Grove Plaza, the Basque Block and beyond.

Cultural Concept Plan Project Sites

Gateways to the Linen District

From the west: 16th and Grove.
From the north: 14th and Main.
From the east: 13th and Grove.

Grove Street Axis of Linear Public Space

Street, sidewalks and planting strips along both sides of Grove Street between 16th and 13th streets.

Linen District Open Spaces

Rhodes Skate Park.
Privately owned unimproved lots.
Privately owned patios, etc.

Blank Party or Property Line Walls and Connector Structure Walls

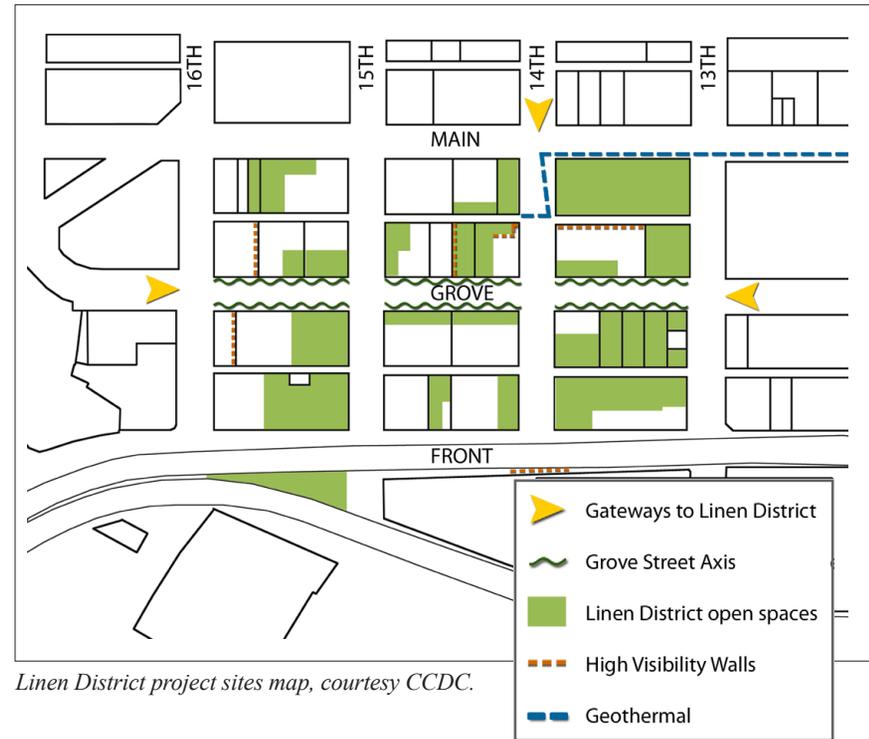
High visibility building walls – alley facades, party walls adjacent to undeveloped properties.
High visibility connector abutment walls.

Billboards, Signage and Advertising

Billboard at 16th and Main streets.
Two-sided billboard on Grove Street between 15th and 14th streets.
Building signage, unused armatures, antique salvaged signs.

Geothermal Heating and other Infrastructure

Any infrastructure easements of public interest, especially geothermal water.



Linen District project sites map, courtesy CCDC.



Entrance to Linen District at 16th and Grove with blank party wall.

Cultural Concept Plan Project Types

Gateways and Markers

At District Entrance sites. Street spanning gateway. Permanent.
District banners/logo marker – light pole armatures or other. Permanent .

Street Furnishings

Public seating. Temporary or permanent.
Public recycling receptacles. Temporary or permanent.

Streetscape and Easements

Linear bioswale/planting strip. Permanent.
Geothermal garden. Permanent.
Sidewalk design. Permanent.
Light pole modification. Permanent.
Tree grate modification. Permanent.
Sewer, water, storm cover/grate. Permanent.

Murals

Multiple scales, multiple sites. Temporary and permanent.

Billboards and Signage

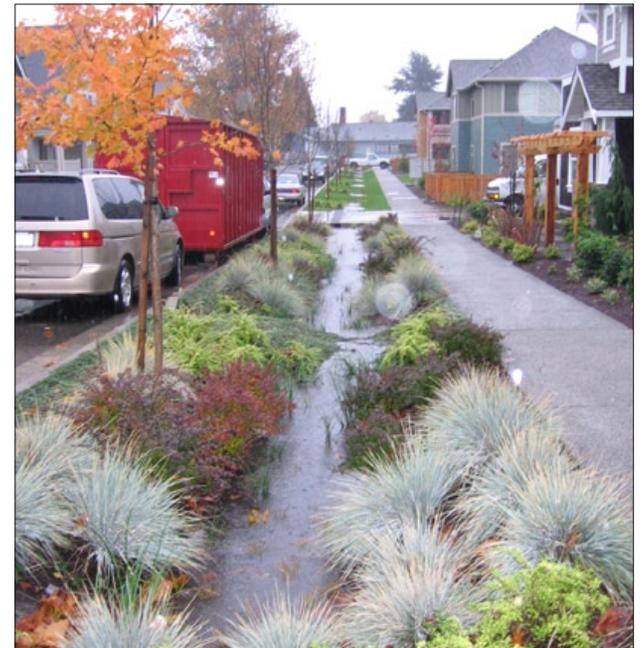
Collaborative stakeholder and/or agency long-term lease of billboards for billboard art series. Temporary.
Salvaged antique sign project. Permanent.

Programming and Performance

Performance, exhibit and/or lecture series.



View of an unimproved edge of Grove Street.



Linear bioswale/planting strip, Puget Sound. Photograph courtesy of SvR Design Company.

Cultural Concept Plan Project Recommendations

The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan presents the following projects for consideration for potential investment and implementation.

Gateways, Markers and Way-finding Signage

The Linen District is characterized by several cultural activities. The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends a project directed toward a permanent, exterior public gateway sculpture or place-marker. This project could include a signage or way-finding project utilizing existing street and traffic light poles as armatures.

Projected timeline: Immediate, ongoing. Permanent installation.

Projected budget: \$50,000 to start.

Intended audience: District visitors, Connector and Main Street passersby.

Artist eligibility: Idaho artists and designers.

Additional funding: Boise City, ACHD, ITD, and Idaho Commission on the Arts.

Cultural Facility

The district is a destination for many artists, especially filmmakers and visiting arts scholars. The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends providing seed funding and other incentives for the establishment of a permanent cultural facility. While any number of museum or performance programs would be entirely appropriate, an institute focused upon film and media providing public screenings, production and workshop facilities is especially recommended.

Projected timeline: Immediate, ongoing. Permanent.

Projected budget: \$50,000 to start.

Intended audience: District visitors, Main, 16th and 15th streets passersby.

Artist eligibility: Regional artists and designers.

Additional funding: Boise City, Idaho Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Grove Street Illuminated and Boise Canal, Amy Westover, and Boise Totems, Rod Kagen, Boise, Idaho. Photos courtesy of Boise City Department of Arts and History.



Bryn Mawr Film Institute is a nonprofit organization in Philadelphia providing film education programs.

Salvaged Signs Collection

The Linen District is characterized by skillfully repurposed buildings. The district exemplifies a sophisticated reuse-and-recycle aesthetic. The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends a project directed toward a permanent, exterior public display of salvaged, antique local signage throughout the district.

Projected timeline: Immediate, ongoing. Permanent installation.

Projected budget: \$50,000 to start.

Intended audience: District visitors, Connector and Main Street passersby.

Artist eligibility: Idaho artists and designers.

Additional funding: Boise City and Idaho Commission on the Arts.



American Sign Museum. Cincinnati, Ohio.

District Billboards

The Linen District attracts media-savvy artists: filmmakers, web developers and visiting scholars. The Metro Express Car Wash's digital billboard currently solicits artist displays on a continuing basis. The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends a rotating series of temporary billboard art interventions on the three existing billboards in the District. This would be accomplished by a lease agreement with the billboard advertising company(s).

Projected timeline: Immediate, ongoing. Temporary installation.

Projected budget: \$30,000 to start, 3 at \$10,000 each (lease and artist fee).

Intended audience: District visitors, Main, 16th and 15th streets passersby.

Artist eligibility: Regional artists and designers.

Additional funding: Boise City and Idaho Commission on the Arts.



Kerry Tribe, from the How Many Billboards project, MAK Center; Los Angeles, California.

Temporary Exterior Wall Murals

The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends a rotating series of temporary exterior wall murals in the district. Ideal sites are: West wall of the Lincoln Building facing 16th Street at Grove Street; alley facade of the Modern Hotel; east party wall of Carpenter's Flowers; west wall of Eyes of the World; abutment wall of connector at the end of 14th Street.

Projected timeline: Immediate, ongoing. Temporary installation.

Projected budget: \$10,000 to start, 4 at \$2,500 each.

Intended audience: District visitors, Main, 16th and 15th streets passersby.

Artist eligibility: Idaho artists and designers.

Additional funding: Boise City and Idaho Commission on the Arts, Idaho Transportation Department and Ada County Highway District.



Murals at Linen Building. Connector abutment wall at end of 14th Street in background.

Street Furniture Collection

The Linen District Cultural Concept Plan recommends developing an artist-designed and/or salvaged street furniture collection: benches, recycling receptacles, parking lot bollards, street light fixtures, etc.

Projected timeline: Immediate, ongoing. Permanent installation.

Projected budget: \$25,000 to start.

Intended audience: District visitors.

Artist eligibility: Idaho artists and designers.

Additional funding: Boise City and Idaho Commission on the Arts, Idaho Transportation Department and Ada County Highway District.



Ceramic tile "sofa." Vancouver, British Columbia.

Stakeholders and Agencies

The Linen District - www.linendistrict.com.

Capital City Development Corporation - www.ccdboise.com.

Boise City Department of Arts and History - www.cityofboise.org/ArtsandHistory.

Businesses

Alloway Lighting

B.F. Evans Building

Baldwin Lock-n-Key

Big City Coffee

Boise City Building Company

Carpet One

Cosmo Prof

Designer Floors

Donnie Mac's Trailer Park Cuisine

Ed Wyse Beauty Supply

Evans Keane LLP

Eyes of the World Imports

Foxtrot Style For Living

Furness Building

G Fit Studio

Grand Avenue Condominiums

Hale Development Inc.

Idaho Youth Ranch

Kieffer Design Group

Lincoln Building

Linen Building Event Center

Metro Express Car Wash

Modern Realty

Oakley Moody

Old Firehouse #5

Rug Decor

Sav-On Café

Second Chance Reuse Building Materials

Sideshow Tattoo

Spearmint Rhino

Terrapin Station

The Linen Building

The Modern Hotel