

FROM LAUNDRY TO LINEN DISTRICT

A White Paper on the Redevelopment of Boise's Linen District and Transferable Lessons for a Developer-Led, Patient-Capital Approach to Small-Scale Urban Renewal

This document was prepared for the Bend Urban Renewal Agency, the Core Area Advisory Board, and relevant stakeholders responsible for transforming the Core Area- a light-industrial corridor into a mixed-use urban district.

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Executive Summary

- **The Linen District began in 2005 when David Hale, a Portland-based developer,** acquired the American Linen Supply Company building, a contaminated and abandoned brownfield. Its rehabilitation initiated a six-block adaptive-reuse strategy. The district’s identity was purposefully rooted in its working-class industrial heritage, rather than adopting a generic “arts” or “creative” brand. [5, 9, 10]
- **A key lesson is that public agencies should catalyze, not replace, private patient capital. Boise’s redevelopment agency (CCDC) did not directly finance adaptive-reuse projects.** Instead, it invested in streetscape, mobility, public art, and infrastructure, which encouraged initial private investment, followed by independent operators and eventually institutional capital. The district demonstrates how patient capital and public infrastructure, sequenced over twenty years, can transform an industrial fringe into a cohesive mixed-use neighborhood. [1, 4, 11]
- **Federal brownfields funding was the critical financial catalyst for the anchor building.** Each \$1 of federal Brownfields funds invested in the Linen Building leveraged more than \$48 in subsequent district investment. The 2001 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant, the first used by a Boise developer, resolved longstanding contamination concerns and enabled redevelopment. [5]
- **This case also highlights the limitations of a small, developer-led district within a larger downtown. Without a** formal Business Improvement District, property assessment district, or single governing entity, the Linen District’s identity has been both a strength—authentic and building-rooted—and a vulnerability, resulting in drifting boundaries and inconsistent brand stewardship after the original developer’s departure.
- **A major ongoing challenge is the primary highway running through the district.** The Front Street / Myrtle Street one-way couplet, carrying U.S. Highways 20/26, was constructed in the 1980s and remains the most significant barrier to pedestrian connectivity. Despite multiple studies and public-realm projects, tensions persist among the city, urban renewal agency, and state highway department. The district’s approach to mitigating this highway barrier offers valuable lessons for agencies facing similar conditions. [6, 7, 8]



Key Findings

- 1. A single developer’s vision, sustained over a decade, established the district before public infrastructure followed.** David Hale conceptualized the Linen District in 2005, acquired multiple properties across the six-block area between 13th and 16th Streets and between Main and Front Streets, and personally oversaw the design, development, and renovation of the Linen Building, The Modern Hotel (acquired by separate ownership and renovated 2007), Big City Coffee (now Caffaina Kitchen), A’Tavola Gourmet Marketplace, the Furness Building, the Lincoln Building, and planned Idaho Street Townhomes. He coined the term “Linen District” in 2005, and the name entered local vernacular within a few years. The City and CCDC’s substantial public-realm investments did not arrive until roughly fifteen to twenty years later. [9, 10]
- 2. Federal brownfields financing was decisive — and replicable.** The American Linen Building site had been abandoned since 1980 and was considered untouchable by developers because of the unknown groundwater contamination risk on and around the property. The 2001 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant produced the environmental assessment and remediation plan; underground storage tanks and contaminated soil were removed between 2001 and 2004; in 2004, the property was determined not to be the source of contamination; and Hale purchased the property in 2005. The post-completion analysis published by Smart Growth America found that every \$1 of federal Brownfields funds invested in the site leveraged more than \$48 of total downstream investment in the surrounding district — one of the most-cited leverage ratios in the federal brownfields literature. [5]
- 3. The anchor building’s rehabilitation enabled a heritage-rooted naming convention that “Arts District” or “Creative District” labels do not provide.** The Linen Building’s history — built in 1910, operated for seven decades by the American Linen Supply Company as the only commercial laundry in the United States that used geothermal water for its operation, employing hundreds of workers under documented, unsafe conditions — gave the district a name that was simultaneously place-specific, industrially authentic, and unique. The branding choice consciously rejected generic creative-district nomenclature in favor of a building-specific identifier. [1, 3]
- 4. The Modern Hotel proved that mid-century motel inventory is reusable and that boutique hospitality can anchor a small district.** The Modern Hotel and Bar at 1314 W. Grove Street — a 39-room renovation of a 1962-era Travelodge motor lodge, executed in 2007 by Elizabeth Tullis (a third-generation Basque hotelier whose grandmother Regina Echevarria opened the original Modern Hotel as a Basque boarding house in Nampa in 1936), architect Dwaine Carver of Trout Architects, and interior designer Kerry Tullis — became the district’s hospitality keystone. The hotel has since been featured in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Vogue, the Los Angeles Times, and Dwell, and



won a Preservation Idaho award. It is one of the rare examples nationally of a mid-century motor lodge successfully reused as a destination boutique hotel without demolition. [12, 13, 14, 15]

- 5. Capital City Development Corporation’s role was infrastructural and catalytic, not financing of vertical development.** CCDC, Idaho’s oldest urban renewal agency (founded 1965 as the Boise Redevelopment Agency, now governed by an eight-member board appointed by the mayor and confirmed by City Council to five-year terms), did not finance the rehabilitation of the Linen Building or the Modern Hotel. CCDC’s contribution came later and on a different axis: capital streetscape projects on 11th Street, Grove Street, Idaho Street, and Capitol Boulevard; participation-program partnerships (analogous to public-private partnership agreements) with new developments including The Broadstone Saratoga, Hotel Renegade, and The Sparrow; public-art commissioning; and direct investment in mobility infrastructure such as the Pioneer Pathway and the 11th Street Bikeway. [16, 17, 18, 19]
- 6. The Linen District’s identity is held informally — a strength and a vulnerability.** Unlike many comparable arts and culture districts, the Linen District is not a formal Business Improvement District, a formal taxing district, or a designated historic district. It has no formal governance entity. It is, in effect, a place-brand sustained by the buildings, the businesses, and word of mouth — which has produced authenticity but has also led to fluid boundaries (some local sources define the district as the six blocks between 13th and 16th Streets and Main and Front Streets, while others extend it further north and east) and intermittent brand stewardship after the founding developer sold the Linen Building in 2014. [1, 9]
- 7. The Front Street / Myrtle Street one-way couplet is the district’s defining infrastructure problem.** Front Street and Myrtle Street are state highways (U.S. 20/26), function as the de facto freeway connector between downtown Boise and Interstate 184 (the “Connector”), each carries five lanes of one-way traffic at a 35 mph posted limit, and together carry approximately 40,000 vehicles per day on Front at 11th Street and approximately 31,000 vehicles per day on Myrtle at 9th Street. The couplet was created in the 1980s when the southern edge of downtown was minimally developed. It pre-dates all of the current downtown south of the couplet substantially — including the Boise Center, the Grove Hotel, the Ada County Courthouse, the Simplot corporate headquarters, JUMP (Jack’s Urban Meeting Place), Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, WinCo, BoDo, and most of what is now the Linen District. The 2013 Jeff Speck Walkability Analysis identified the couplet as the single most significant barrier to downtown two-way reversion; the 2017 Front + Myrtle Couplet Alternatives Analysis by Sam Schwartz Consulting (commissioned by CCDC in partnership with the City, the Ada County Highway District, and the Idaho Transportation Department) developed a menu of potential interventions; and the resulting jurisdictional disagreement between local agencies and the state highway department has produced incremental, but not transformative, improvements. [6, 7, 8, 20]



8. A second wave of institutional investment is now consolidating the district, twenty years after Hale’s initial vision. As of mid-2025, the immediate area is hosting more than \$340 million of new construction, including the \$100 million Broadstone Saratoga (306 mixed-use residential units, 7,000+ square feet of ground-floor retail, 377 parking spaces, completed May 2025 on the parcel that hosted the original 2012 Treefort Music Fest Main Stage); the 122-room Hotel Renegade (an eight-story boutique hotel by Hendricks Commercial Properties, designed by CSHQA, at 11th and Grove); and The Sparrow (a 68-room hotel by Nest Partners and Oppenheimer Companies, repositioning the former Safari Inn at 11th and Grove). The CCDC-led Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street capital project — comprehensive streetscape, intersection, and public-art improvements between 9th and 16th Streets — was completed in October 2025. This wave is the predictable consequence of, and validation of, the patient-capital strategy that began two decades earlier. [16, 21, 22]



Details

1. Historical Context: Why the District Existed Where It Did

The blocks that became the Linen District sit on the western edge of historic downtown Boise, immediately west of the historic downtown core. From the 1880s through the 1940s, this was the working light-industrial fringe of an emerging Western capital city. The area accumulated the characteristic uses of that era: warehouses, commercial laundries, automobile-related businesses, small manufacturing shops, freight handling, livery and stabling, and the service-trade businesses that supported a growing rail-served downtown. The largest single industrial concern in the area, and the building from which the district eventually took its name, was the American Linen Supply Company.

The Linen Building at 14th and Grove Streets was built in 1910 and operated for seven decades as the home of the American Linen Supply Company (historical sources sometimes refer to it as the American Laundry Building). The building had two characteristics that made it nationally distinctive. First, it was the only commercial laundry in the United States that used geothermal water in its operations — a remarkable industrial use of Boise’s unique geothermal aquifer system, which was being deployed across the city for downtown heating from the 1890s onward and which gave Boise the largest geothermal heating district in the nation. Second, the working conditions inside the building were documented as severe: workers (predominantly women) operated in an environment of toxic chemicals, intense heat from steam-pressing operations, low pay, and long shifts. The American Linen Supply Company’s labor history was, in other words, a story typical of early-twentieth-century commercial laundries nationally. [1, 3]

The building’s commercial operation ended in 1980, by which time the spread of residential washing machines and the consolidation of commercial laundry services had eliminated the business case for a downtown-located industrial laundry. The building was abandoned in place. Toxic chemicals from decades of laundry operations had spilled inside and outside the building over time and had seeped into surrounding soils, creating a brownfield condition that — combined with the building’s eccentric industrial floor plate — caused developers to avoid the site for the next two decades. The Linen Building sat empty for twenty-five years. [1]

The broader area underwent a parallel decline. Boise’s downtown core consolidated eastward in the mid-to-late twentieth century around the Capitol Building, the Idaho State government complex, and the traditional commercial spine on Main and Idaho Streets between 7th and 10th Streets. The blocks west of about 11th Street, including what is now the Linen District, fell out of the active downtown economy. They were further impacted by urban renewal-era clearance projects in the 1960s and 1970s, by the gradual conversion of remaining industrial parcels to surface parking serving downtown commuters, and most decisively by the construction of the Front Street / Myrtle Street one-way couplet in the 1980s, which

converted what had been bidirectional commercial streets into high-speed one-way state highways and severed the district's southern edge from the river and the southern edge of the downtown core.

Transferable Observation

Light-industrial districts on the fringes of growing Western city downtowns share a recognizable life cycle: rail-and-river-driven industrial peak through the 1920s, mid-century decline as logistics consolidated, urban-renewal-era clearance that left surface parking in place of demolished buildings, and freeway-era infrastructure that disconnected the district from its surroundings. A redevelopment agency taking on such a district inherits not only the physical condition but also a layered history of prior public interventions, several of which (especially the freeway-era street designs) may now need to be partially reversed.

2. Naming and Identity Formation

The Linen District's identity formed unusually late, unusually quickly, and unusually completely. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the six-block area had no shared name. The closest reference was simply "the West End" or "west downtown."



Source: Linen District

David Hale — a developer originally based in Portland, Oregon — became interested in the area in the early 2000s after the EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant had clarified the contamination risk on the American Linen Building site. He purchased the Linen Building in 2005, renovated it into a flexible event space, and coined the term "Linen District" to refer to the six-block area between 13th and 16th Streets, Main Street, and Front Street, which he intended to redevelop around the Linen Building as the anchor. He acquired additional properties in the area over the following decade and renovated them — among them the buildings that

became Big City Coffee, A'Tavola Gourmet Marketplace, the Furness Building, the Lincoln Building, and the planned Idaho Street Townhomes. [9, 10]

The branding choice deserves separate examination. By 2005, when Hale coined the name, dozens of American cities had attempted to brand redeveloping downtown-adjacent areas as "Arts Districts," "Creative Districts," "Warehouse Districts," "Innovation Districts," or with cardinal-direction labels like "NoDo," "SoWa," or "WeHo." Hale rejected these generic patterns. The "Linen District" name had three properties that made it distinctive:



- **It was building-specific.** The name pointed to a single named structure that the public could see and visit.
- **It was historically authentic.** It described what the building had actually been used for over seven decades, rather than projecting an aspirational identity onto the area.
- **It was unique in the national namespace.** No other American urban district was using “Linen” as a place-brand. [3, 5]

The name gradually entered the local vernacular and became completely accepted. By the early 2010s, real estate listings, restaurant guides, local press, and tourism publications were consistently using “Linen District” to describe the area. By the time CCDC began its 2020s capital-project planning, the agency’s own project naming conventions (the “Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street” project, for example) used the district name without qualification. [16]

Transferable Observation

Names that come from buildings are stickier than those from marketing committees. If a single building in a redevelopment area has a name with historical resonance, that building is the most defensible source for the district’s identity. Generic “Arts” and “Creative” labels are easy to copy and tend to erode over time as similar labels appear in adjacent cities; building-specific names are harder to imitate and harder to lose.

3. Early Adaptive Reuse and the Anchor Building

The Linen Building itself is an 11,683-square-foot brick industrial structure at the corner of Grove and 14th Streets, built in 1910. Following remediation, Hale purchased and renovated it in 2005, converting it into a flexible event space for concerts, weddings, conferences, art exhibits, nonprofit benefits, and private events. The building’s exposed brick interior, industrial ceiling heights, and the surviving exterior steam stacks were retained as visible heritage features. The building hosted a regular concert program for nearly a decade under Hale’s operation. [1, 3, 11]

In June 2014, Hale announced that the Linen Building was for sale; the sale closed in September 2014 to a private investor group, and Hale continued operating events through the end of that year. After several years of intermediate uses, the building became the headquarters of the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence, which now both occupies the space and rents it (often at little or no cost) to nonprofit organizations, including the Women’s & Children’s Alliance, the ACLU, and the Idaho Peace Coalition, as well as to weddings and private events. The Coalition’s mission-driven occupation of a building that was once a site of harmful labor conditions for women has been described, including by the Coalition itself, as a deliberate symbolic and material transformation. [1]



Around the Linen Building, Hale acquired and renovated additional buildings:

- **Big City Coffee** (later rebranded under different ownership as Caffaina Kitchen) became a daytime anchor on Grove Street, demonstrating that retail food and beverage could be sustained in the area before residential density existed.
- **A’Tavola Gourmet Marketplace** occupied the Lincoln Building, becoming an artisanal-food anchor with adjacent uses.
- **The Furness Building** was renovated for mixed commercial use.
- **The Lincoln Building** housed A’Tavola and the Azure Hair Salon. [10]

In 2015, Hale also filed plans for the **Idaho Street Townhomes** — a fifteen-unit residential development on a vacant lot on Idaho Street between 16th and 17th Streets, designed by Cole Architects, with flexible floor plans for live/work configurations and oversized garages oriented to Boise’s outdoor-recreation culture. The townhomes were positioned at the west edge of the district as Hale’s first deliberate residential investment after a decade of commercial adaptive reuse. [10]

Transferable observation

A single developer working at patient-capital pace can convert an entire small district over a decade if (a) one anchor building has historical resonance, (b) the developer is willing to absorb early operating losses while the market case builds, and (c) the early adaptive-reuse tenants are independent food, beverage, and retail operators rather than national chains. The pattern is replicable but slow: the Linen District took roughly twenty years from Hale’s initial vision (2005) to the completion of CCDC’s first major streetscape investment (2025).

4. Catalytic Projects and Anchor Tenants

The Linen District’s catalytic projects can be grouped into four phases:

Phase 1 — Pioneer adaptive reuse (2004–2010). The Linen Building (Hale, 2005), Big City Coffee (relocated to Grove Street), and The Modern Hotel and Bar (2007 renovation by Elizabeth Tullis and her family of a 1962 Boise Travelodge / Center Guest Lodge into a 39-room boutique hotel at 1314 W. Grove Street). The Modern Hotel’s transformation was particularly important: the family of the original Modern (a Basque boarding house operated by Regina Echevarria in Nampa from 1936, which the family ran for sixty years) brought Basque hospitality lineage and design ambition to the project; architect Dwaine Carver of Trout Architects executed a restrained mid-century-modern renovation; and interior designer Kerry Tullis curated the interior to honor the 1962 mid-century period without descending into pastiche. The hotel was subsequently profiled by The New York Times, New York Magazine, Vogue, the Los Angeles Times, and Dwell. It won a Preservation Idaho award for the rehabilitation. [12, 13, 14, 15]

Phase 2 — Food and beverage anchoring (2007–2014). Independent restaurants, bars, and cafés are layered around the Linen Building and Modern Hotel, including Bittercreek Alehouse and Red Feather Lounge (a long-running independent restaurant and bar in the broader downtown area), as well as a series of cafés and small retailers along Grove and Idaho Streets. Catalytic restaurant Fork opened nearby; the more recent State & Lemp (a notable destination restaurant) operated until its closure; Wild Root Café established itself as a daytime food anchor. The catalytic role of independent restaurants in this phase was the same as in many comparable adaptive-reuse districts nationally — they brought reliable evening visitation patterns and validated the area for new investors.

Phase 3 — Programming and event anchor (2012–present). The **Treefort** Music Fest, founded in March 2012 by Eric Gilbert and a group of co-founders, held its inaugural festival in the Linen District — 137 artists, 8 venues, four days, with the Main Stage in a parking lot on Grove Street between 12th and 13th Streets (the parcel that is now the Broadstone Saratoga residential development). Treefort has since become Boise’s defining cultural event: the City of Boise designated it the city’s Cultural Ambassador



Source: Hotel Guru

from 2015 to 2017; by 2019 the festival drew more than 25,000 attendees; the 2022 festival was estimated to deliver approximately \$11 million in economic impact; and by 2026 the festival had grown to a five-day event featuring 14 thematic “forts” (Alefors, Artfors, Storyfors, Filmfors, Comedyfors, Dragfors, Skatefors, Yogafors, Hackfors, Music

Talks, and others), more than 500 artists, and approximately 20,000 attendees per day. The Main Stage has since relocated to Julia Davis Park, and the permanent Treefort Music Hall venue now operates year-round, but the festival’s origins in the Linen District remain part of the district’s identity. [23, 24, 25]

Phase 4 — Institutional consolidation (2020–present). As of 2025, the immediate area is hosting more than \$340 million of construction, including:

- **The Broadstone Saratoga**, a \$100 million mixed-use residential development at 1201 W. Grove Street by Alliance Residential, is designed by Urbal Architecture. The project includes 306 residential units (studio to two-bedroom), 263,990 square feet of residential space, 7,000+ square feet of ground-floor retail, and 377 parking spaces. Construction began in winter 2022 and was completed in May 2025. CCDC entered into a Participation Program agreement with the developer to coordinate Broadstone’s private investment with CCDC’s adjacent Linen Blocks Streetscape project. [21]



- **Hotel Renegade**, an eight-story, 122-room boutique hotel by Hendricks Commercial Properties at 1110 W. Grove Street (the intersection of Grove and 11th), designed by CSHQA. [22]
- **The Sparrow**, a redevelopment of the former Safari Inn at 1070 W. Grove Street by Nest Partners and Oppenheimer Companies (with Idaho Central Credit Union as the property owner), is a 68-room renovation that converted a former parking lot into additional units, designed by CSHQA. [22]

Transferable Observation

The four-phase pattern (pioneer adaptive reuse → food and beverage anchoring → programming and event anchoring → institutional consolidation) appears reliably in successful small-district redevelopments. The most important inflection point is the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2: independent food and beverage operators will only commit if at least one architectural anchor has demonstrated that the district is “going somewhere.” Without that demonstration, the area remains a parking-lot economy.

5. CCDC and the Urban Renewal Framework

CCDC (Capital City Development Corporation) is Boise’s urban renewal agency, established in 1965 by the City of Boise as the Boise Redevelopment Agency. It is one of the oldest urban renewal agencies in the western United States. The agency is governed by an eight-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the Boise City Council to five-year, unpaid terms; the agency employs approximately nineteen staff. CCDC’s activities are funded by tax increment financing (referred to in Idaho Code as “revenue allocation”), parking system revenues, and outside grants.

CCDC currently administers six urban renewal districts. Two of them directly contain or border the Linen District:

- **The River Myrtle–Old Boise (RMOB) District** was formed in 1996 as a community-led effort to ensure that downtown Boise remained the region's foremost urban center. At formation, the district encompassed mostly vacant property, warehouses, and remnants of older industrial uses. It now covers more than sixty blocks of downtown Boise. The 2021 CCDC budget forecast approximately \$11.7 million in tax increment collections from the RMOB district, representing approximately 60 percent of CCDC’s total TIF revenues. CCDC’s “Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street” capital project is administered through the RMOB district. [16, 27]
- **The Westside District** covers nearly fifty blocks immediately west of the historic downtown core. The Westside district’s master plan was designed to support a “healthy, thriving urban neighborhood with a strong sense of place” through housing diversification, walkable urban form, and street-level activation. According to CCDC’s published characterization, the Westside District “includes a portion of the downtown core, a residential neighborhood to the west, and the burgeoning Linen District with an eclectic mix of shops and restaurants.” [26, 28]



The Linen District thus sits at the boundary between two CCDC urban renewal districts — a circumstance that has produced both administrative challenges (which district funds which project) and opportunities (the area benefits from both districts' capital plans). CCDC has handled the boundary by managing certain corridor projects across both districts (the Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street project covers Grove Street from 9th to 16th, spanning both RMOB and Westside) and by administering district-specific projects (the 11th Street Bikeway, the Idaho/14th Street parcels) within their respective district budgets. [16, 17]

6. Public Infrastructure Investments

CCDC's role in the Linen District has been almost entirely infrastructural — streetscape, mobility, public realm, and public art. The agency's principal capital investments in and around the Linen District over the past decade include:

Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street (completed October 2025). A comprehensive streetscape, intersection, and placemaking project covering West Grove Street between 9th and 16th Streets, administered through the RMOB district. The project included safer and smoother roadway construction; replacement of decades-old sidewalks; addition of street trees, lighting, and furnishings; integration of public art (including the Neon Grove sign collection — a partnership with Boise nonprofit Signs of Our Times and the Boise City Department of Arts & History — and two “art ports” rotating sculpture by Boise State University students); interpretive signage telling the story of the Linen District as part of the broader Grove Street Interpretive Signage project; and CCDC Participation Program partnerships with The Sparrow Hotel, Hotel Renegade, and The Broadstone Saratoga to coordinate adjacent private investment with the public-realm work. [16]

Rebuild 11th Street Blocks. A multi-year, multi-block capital project to rebuild 11th Street as an all-ages, all-abilities protected bikeway from State Street to River Street, with associated streetscape improvements, roadway reconstruction, replacement of an outdated underground Boise City Canal structure dating to the 1950s, protected crosswalks at high-use intersections, and the addition of trees, lighting, and pedestrian amenities. The project was designed by Jensen Belts Associates and constructed by McAlvain Construction. The bikeway's raised-bike-lane design — set at sidewalk level but separated from pedestrians by a “furnishings zone” of trees, benches, and bike racks — was novel for Boise; CCDC chose it specifically because it preserved approximately 80 percent of on-street parking (versus 50 percent loss under a separated street-level alternative). The 11th Street design includes raised median islands at the intersections of 11th and Myrtle and 11th and Front to physically protect pedestrians and cyclists during the highway-couplet crossings; ACHD provided signal adjustments to implement Leading Pedestrian and Bicycle Intervals at these intersections. [17, 19, 31]

Pioneer Pathway. A three-phase shared-use recreational pathway between the Boise River Greenbelt near Pioneer Bridge and downtown Boise, running through the River Street neighborhood in the RMOB

urban renewal district. The third and final phase, between the south side of River Street and the Greenbelt by Ann Morrison Park, was completed in February 2016. The pathway is maintained in perpetuity by Boise Parks & Recreation under right-of-way and easement protections. A pathway connection through the Simplot HQ/JUMP project on the parcel between Myrtle, Front, 9th, and 11th Streets links Pioneer Pathway through the property to Broad Street, providing a walking and biking connection between River Street and the BoDo, Grove Plaza, and Central Addition (LIV) districts. [18, 32]

Front and Myrtle Couplet Alternatives Analysis (2017). Commissioned by CCDC and produced by Sam Schwartz Consulting, the analysis examined the Front Street / Myrtle Street one-way couplet system and developed a menu of potential interventions ranging from incremental (signal retiming, leading pedestrian intervals, additional crosswalks, narrower travel lanes, weekend/evening on-street parking) to transformative (couplet reversion to two-way, pedestrian overpasses, tunnels, or skybridges). The analysis was jointly funded by CCDC, the City of Boise, the Ada County Highway District, COMPASS (the regional metropolitan planning organization), and the Idaho Transportation Department. The analysis identified Front and Myrtle as “freeway-like” infrastructure acting as a “physical and psychological barrier... for those walking and biking.” Near-term improvements implemented as a result include expanding curb extensions and shortening pedestrian crossing distances at approximately 20 locations along Front and Myrtle (executed in

coordination with an ITD resurfacing project), and a redesigned connection between the Pioneer Pathway and the 11th & Myrtle intersection. The longer-term recommendations of the analysis remain partially unimplemented



because ITD, which has jurisdiction over Front and Myrtle as state highways, has maintained that any redesign must preserve five-lane unimpeded auto throughput. [6, 7, 8, 20]

Capitol Boulevard Streetscape Improvements (Boise River to Myrtle Street). Streetscape improvements, pedestrian crossing at Fulton Street, and a curb bulb-out at the northeast corner of Myrtle

Street, designed by The Land Group and constructed by Guho. Coordinated with ACHD’s “Capitol Boulevard Concept” project from Vista Avenue to the Greenbelt. [33]

Treefort Footprint Public Artist Designed Infrastructure. A \$155,000 CCDC commitment to fund artist-designed infrastructure at 12th and 13th Streets — the parking-lot site of the original 2012 Treefort Music Fest Main Stage, now the location of the Broadstone Saratoga. The project is intended to mark the original Treefort site and to integrate public art into the new streetscape. [3]

Transferable Observation

A redevelopment agency’s most reliable lever in a small district is its ability to invest in the public realm at a quality level that no private property owner could justify on a single-parcel basis. Raised protected bike lanes, integrated public art at intersections, leading pedestrian intervals, curb extensions, and lit greenway-to-downtown connections each individually deliver modest benefit; combined and sequenced over five-to ten-year periods, they produce a compounded transformation. CCDC’s experience suggests that the unit cost of public-realm investment ranges from \$5 to \$15 million per multi-block streetscape project, financed through TIF revenues and, where possible, supplemented by ACHD, state, and federal cost-shared programs.

7. Food, Beverage, and Hospitality as Placemaking

The Linen District’s primary placemaking layer — beyond the anchor architecture — has been independent food, beverage, and hospitality businesses. Unlike larger creative districts that anchor on craft brewing, the Linen District’s restaurant and café layer has been more diverse: independent restaurants and bars, café-and-coffee anchors, and one nationally-recognized boutique hotel.

The Modern Hotel and Bar, in particular, has functioned beyond its room count as the district’s evening anchor. The hotel’s bar program (described in local press as having “the best cocktails in town”) and outdoor courtyard, complete with fire pits, bistro lights, and triangular shade structures, gave the district a single durable evening gathering place. The Modern’s restaurant program — locally-sourced, seasonal,



and brunch-anchored — gave the district daytime food-and-beverage credibility. The Modern’s presence in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Vogue, the Los Angeles Times, and Dwell coverage extended the district’s reach well beyond Boise. [12, 13, 14, 15]

Big City Coffee (rebranded under successor ownership as Caffaina Kitchen) functioned as the daytime coffee anchor on Grove Street. A’Tavola Gourmet Marketplace, in the renovated Lincoln



Building, served as the artisanal-food specialty anchor. Bittercreek Alehouse and Red Feather Lounge, while not located inside the strict six-block district boundary, served as long-running independent restaurants in the immediately adjacent area; Fork (a destination farm-to-table restaurant on Main Street), Wild Root Café (a daytime food anchor), and the now-closed State & Lemp (a destination tasting-menu restaurant operated by chefs Kris Komori and Remi McManus) each added evening destination programming.

The 2020s wave of hospitality — Hotel Renegade (122 rooms, eight stories, four restaurants and three bars/lounges per published amenities, by Hendricks Commercial Properties) and The Sparrow (68 rooms, three stories, a Safari Inn renovation by Nest Partners and Oppenheimer Companies) — has approximately tripled the district’s hotel-room inventory and consolidated its hospitality positioning. [22]

Transferable Observation

A small redevelopment district can sustain an independent food, beverage, and hospitality economy long before it sustains residential density, but only if the agency is patient with retail-rent expectations during the early years. CCDC’s preservation of the gritty, building-anchored character of the area — rather than pushing for “Class A retail” finishes in the first decade — was essential to allowing the Modern Hotel and the early independent restaurant operators to commit when the surrounding parcels were still surface parking lots.

8. Programming and Events

The Linen District’s signature event identity is Treefort Music Fest. The festival was conceived in 2012 by Eric Gilbert and a small group of friends — by his own account, in response to a perception that Boise’s local music and creative scene was unrecognized outside the region. The inaugural festival ran March 22–25, 2012, with 137 artists performing at 8 venues across downtown Boise, anchored by a Main Stage in a parking lot on Grove Street between 12th and 13th Streets (the parcel now occupied by the Broadstone Saratoga). Alefort emerged as the first thematic “fort,” and the festival was supported by more than 200 volunteers and dozens of downtown businesses. Several thousand fans attended. [23, 24, 25, 34]

Treefort’s subsequent trajectory has been one of consistent expansion:

- **2015–2017:** City of Boise Cultural Ambassador designation. [24]
- **2019:** Approximately 25,000 attendees across the five-day event. [25]
- **2022:** Approximately \$11 million estimated economic impact (Boise Convention and Visitors Bureau estimate). [35]
- **2026:** Five-day festival, 14 thematic forts (Alefort, Artfort, Storyfort, Filmfort, Comedyfort, Dragfort, Skatefort, Yogafort, Hackfort, Music Talks, and others), more than 500 artists from dozens of countries, approximately 20,000 attendees per day. Main Stage now at Julia Davis



Park; venues include the Bandshell at Julia Davis Park, the permanent Treefort Music Hall, Boise Brewing, the Shine Basement and Ballroom, Neurolux, the District, El Korah Shrine, Lost Grove Brewing, the Basque Center, and the Boise Masonic Temple. [25, 36]

CCDC has invested in marking the original 2012 Main Stage site through the \$155,000 Treefort Footprint Public Artist-Designed Infrastructure project, integrated into the Rebuild Linen Blocks streetscape on Grove Street. [3]

Beyond Treefort, the Linen Building (when operated as an events venue under Hale’s ownership from 2007 to 2014) hosted concerts, weddings, conferences, and nonprofit benefits; under its current operation by the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence, it continues to host events, though at a more selective cadence. First Thursday gallery and retail walks across downtown Boise reach into the Linen District. The Boise Farmers Market (formerly held at 10th and Grove, in the parking lot at the eastern edge of the district) provides Saturday-morning programming during the warm season.

Transferable Observation

The most reliable form of recurring programming for a small redevelopment district is a flagship annual or seasonal music or arts festival that uses multiple venues across the district. The festival validates the district’s identity beyond the local audience, provides a national press hook, and creates an annual “must-mark” peak that sustains visitation throughout the rest of the year. The most useful agency contribution to such a festival is permitting flexibility (closing streets, allowing temporary use of vacant parcels), wayfinding investment, and direct funding for festival infrastructure such as the artist-designed installations CCDC funded at the original Main Stage site.

9. Branding and Wayfinding

The Linen District’s brand is held informally rather than institutionally. The district has no Business Improvement District, no formal property assessment district, no centralized marketing organization, and no continuously employed brand manager. The “Linen District” name is used by independent businesses on their websites, by Visit Boise and the Downtown Boise Association in tourism materials, by CCDC in capital-project naming, and by real estate listings in apartment and condominium marketing.

CCDC’s Grove Street Interpretive Signage program, integrated into the Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street project, has introduced district-specific interpretive signage telling the story of the Linen Building, the American Linen Supply Company’s industrial and labor history, and the broader Grove Street corridor. The Neon Grove sign collection — a partnership with the nonprofit Signs of Our Times and the Boise City Department of Arts & History — has installed restored historic Boise neon signs along the Grove Street corridor, evoking the mid-century commercial era of the area. Two “art ports”, rotating sculptures by Boise State University students, provide a refreshing public-art program. [16, 37]



Transferable Observation

Informal brand stewardship is workable for small districts (under ten blocks) embedded in a larger downtown ecosystem; it is much less workable for larger districts or freestanding districts. Where a small district lacks a formal BID or brand manager, the urban renewal agency should fund and own the district's wayfinding, interpretive signage, and public-art programs — these become the de facto brand infrastructure. The Linen District's interpretive signage and Neon Grove installations function as the district's brand because no separate entity is doing so.

10. The Highway Challenge: Front and Myrtle as Primary US Highway Through the District

This section is the most directly transferable element of the Linen District case to other redevelopment contexts. The Front Street/Myrtle Street one-way couplet — functioning together as U.S. Highways 20/26 — runs through the immediate southern edge of the Linen District and presents the single most significant ongoing redevelopment obstacle.

Physical and operational characteristics. Front Street carries westbound traffic; Myrtle Street, one block south, carries eastbound traffic. Each street has five travel lanes (no on-street parking through most of the couplet length), a 35 mph posted speed limit, and signalized intersections at nearly every block. The couplet flows into Interstate 184, the “Connector,” which provides the freeway connection between downtown Boise and the western Treasure Valley. Most recent traffic counts indicate approximately 40,000 vehicles per day on Front Street at 11th Street and approximately 31,000 vehicles per day on Myrtle Street at 9th Street, with afternoon peak volumes approaching 3,800 vehicles per hour at the peak intersections. [6, 7, 8, 20]

Origin. The couplet was created in the 1980s, when the southern edge of downtown was largely undeveloped. As described in the 2018 ULI Front and Myrtle panel discussion, “the couplet pre-dates BoDo, JUMP, the Simplot corporate headquarters, the Boise Center, the Grove Hotel, Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, WinCo, the Ada County Courthouse, and nearly everything else that lines the length of Myrtle and Front streets.” The couplet’s design assumptions — that the streets primarily moved cars between downtown employment and West Treasure Valley commuter origins — are no longer valid as downtown has densified southward over the past 35 years. [8]

Jurisdictional structure. Front and Myrtle are state highways under the jurisdiction of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). Traffic signals along the corridor are controlled by the Ada County Highway District (ACHD). The City of Boise has limited direct authority over the design or operation of the streets. CCDC has no formal authority. This jurisdictional structure has produced sustained tension. As BoiseDev reported in 2016, CCDC’s draft request-for-proposal for the Front and Myrtle Alternatives



Analysis was returned by ITD with substantial red-line revisions, particularly in language that ITD viewed as predisposing the outcome toward reducing auto throughput. ITD has consistently maintained the position that “anything we do on Front and Myrtle has to consider a ripple effect on I-184” and that any redesign must preserve five-lane unimpeded auto flow. [6, 20]

The 2013 Jeff Speck Walkability Analysis. Commissioned by CCDC, urbanist Jeff Speck’s downtown walkability analysis identified Front and Myrtle as the most significant barrier to two-way reversion of downtown one-way streets. Speck’s report noted that “with the exception of the Front & Myrtle pair and the southern half of the Capitol & 9th pair, there do not seem to be any significant impediments to a full two-way reversion” elsewhere downtown, and that “no other street handles a volume of traffic that would burden it in a two-way configuration.” Speck recommended retaining Front, Myrtle, Capitol, 9th, Idaho, and Main as one-way pairs while reverting lesser streets to two-way operation; the recommendation was partially implemented. The Speck report also noted that the green-signal progression timing on Front, Myrtle, Capitol, and 9th was set at a pace that “welcomes driving at speeds slightly above the posted limit” — a signal-timing problem that has been addressed only partially. [38]

The 2015 Boise Elevated business analysis. Boise Elevated, a downtown business advocacy organization, engaged more than two dozen downtown businesses and confirmed that pedestrian and cyclist safety in the corridor and the “psychological barrier” effect on retailers in BoDo and south of Myrtle Street were major business concerns. The Boise Elevated study was an important precursor to the 2017 alternatives analysis. [7]

The 2017 Front + Myrtle Couplet Alternatives Analysis. Commissioned by CCDC in partnership with the City of Boise, ACHD, COMPASS, and ITD, and produced by Sam Schwartz Consulting, the analysis developed a menu of potential interventions. The most ambitious recommendations (full two-way reversion, pedestrian overpasses, tunnels) were politically infeasible given ITD’s posture; the most easily implemented recommendations were retiming traffic signals to allow longer pedestrian phases, adding additional pedestrian crossings (including new signal-controlled crossings at Front/10th, Front/12th, Myrtle/5th, and Myrtle at Avenue A), adding new west-side crosswalk legs at several existing intersections (Avenue A, 2nd Street, Capitol), narrowing some lanes in places, and considering weekend and evening on-street parking on Front and Myrtle. Speed limit reduction was also considered. [6, 20]

Implemented near-term improvements. Following the alternatives analysis, CCDC and ITD coordinated on several near-term measures during an ITD resurfacing project: expansion of curb extensions and shortening of pedestrian crossing distances at approximately 20 locations along Front and Myrtle, and a redesigned connection between the Pioneer Pathway and the 11th & Myrtle intersection (the “Pioneer Corner” project), which widened the pathway-paver area on the southwest corner of Myrtle and 11th and added a directional pedestrian-ramp configuration. Raised median islands at the 11th/Front and 11th/Myrtle intersections were installed as part of the Rebuild 11th Street Bikeway. ACHD implemented



Leading Pedestrian and Bicycle Intervals (LPI/LBI) at the 11th/Front and 11th/Myrtle intersections. [17, 19, 39]

Outstanding issues. As of 2025, ITD continued to require approval for any modifications to four intersections on Front and Myrtle that are state highway facilities. CCDC’s design teams continue to await ITD signoff on additional traffic-analysis-driven changes. Full two-way reversion has not been implemented. A “rebuild” of the couplet at the scale of comparable downtown highway-to-boulevard conversions in other cities (e.g., partial freeway removal projects in Rochester, NY, Akron, OH, or Niagara Falls, NY) has not been undertaken.

Transferable Observation

The Linen District’s highway-couplet experience offers six concrete lessons for redevelopment agencies facing a similar primary-highway condition: (1) Begin the conversation with the state highway department five to ten years before any redesign is sought, (2) Use joint funding for the alternatives analysis, (3) Sequence interventions from least controversial to most controversial — curb extensions and leading pedestrian intervals are implementable during resurfacing projects without state DOT redesign approval, (4) Develop near-term partnerships with adjacent redevelopment projects, (5) Build mobility infrastructure that bypasses the highway barrier rather than crossing it, and (6) Acknowledge that the highway barrier may persist for decades and design district programming, marketing, and capital investment accordingly — the District has thrived despite, rather than because of, the highway couplet.

11. Governance Structure

The Linen District has no formal governing entity. The principal stakeholders are:

- **Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC)** — Boise’s urban renewal agency, founded in 1965, governing the two urban renewal districts (RMOB and Westside) that contain the Linen District. CCDC owns the public-realm investment role. [4]
- **City of Boise Planning and Development Services Department** — owner of land use entitlements, zoning, design review, and the city’s broader downtown framework planning. [40]
- **Ada County Highway District (ACHD)** — owner of city streets and traffic signals (except Front and Myrtle, which are state highways). ACHD partnered with CCDC on the 11th Street Bikeway and signal-timing improvements. [19]
- **Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)** — owner of Front and Myrtle as state highways. [6]
- **Downtown Boise Association (DBA)** — a business-led downtown organization that includes Linen District businesses among its broader downtown membership but does not function as a Linen District–specific BID. [41]
- **Idaho Smart Growth** — a regional smart-growth advocacy organization that gave Hale’s Linen District redevelopment a Smart Growth award. [10]



- **Hale Development**, which, until the 2014 sale of the Linen Building, was the de facto convener of district-level interests, and which retained some properties in the area after the Linen Building sale. [10]
- **Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence** — current owner-operator of the Linen Building, providing a mission-driven anchor occupancy for the namesake building. [1]
- **The Tullis family** — owner-operators of The Modern Hotel and Bar across all three generations of family ownership of the “Modern” name. [12, 14]

This federated structure has produced both authenticity (no single voice can sanitize the district’s brand) and fragility (no single voice can defend the district’s interests when issues arise involving the highway couplet, parking pressure, or institutional consolidation). The 2017 Front and Myrtle Alternatives Analysis was successful partly because CCDC effectively served as the convening organization across multiple agency partners; replicating that convening role for other district-scale issues has been more difficult.

Transferable Observation

A district embedded in a larger area does not always need a formal BID or a formal brand manager organization, but it does need at least one institutional actor willing to serve as a convening voice on district-scale issues. In the Linen District’s case, CCDC has been the convener for infrastructure issues; no equivalent convener exists for brand, programming, retail mix, or commercial tenant retention issues.

12. Economic Development Outcomes

By the mid-2020s, the Linen District comprised roughly 40 to 60 active retail, food and beverage, hospitality, professional services, and nonprofit tenants across the six-block area between 13th and 16th Streets and Main and Front Streets. Major tenants and uses included the Linen Building (Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence and event venue), The Modern Hotel and Bar (39 rooms plus restaurant and bar), Hotel Renegade (122 rooms plus four restaurants and three bars/lounges), The Sparrow (68 rooms), the Broadstone Saratoga (306 residential units plus ground-floor retail), Caffaina Kitchen (formerly Big City Coffee), A’Tavola Gourmet Marketplace, Alloway Lighting, Cosmo Prof, the Idaho Youth Ranch Thrift Store, Crazy Neighbor, and a range of smaller restaurants, shops, and offices. [1, 2, 11]

Property values within the area have risen significantly since 2005, although the Linen District is not separately tracked in CCDC’s published TIF revenue accounting. CCDC’s overall report cites property value growth within Boise’s urban renewal districts running at approximately 18 percent over the past ten years — a rate that, while not specifically attributable to the Linen District, is consistent with the broader downtown trajectory. [4]



The Linen District’s catalytic effect on adjacent development is most clearly demonstrated by the post-2020 construction wave. The approximately \$340 million in recent construction in the immediately adjacent area — the Broadstone Saratoga, Hotel Renegade, The Sparrow, and other smaller projects — was directly enabled by the district’s prior 20 years of pioneering adaptive reuse. The Broadstone Saratoga’s selection of the parcel between 12th and 13th on Grove (formerly the Treefort Main Stage parking lot) for a \$100 million mixed-use residential development would not have been credible in 2005; it was credible in 2022 because of the cumulative public and private investment that preceded it. [21, 22]

Transferable Observation

The catalytic effect in small redevelopment districts is more reliably measurable in retrospect than in real time. Agencies should expect a 10- to 20-year lag between pioneer adaptive reuse investments and institutional capital consolidation. The “land value lift” produced by district-level investment is real but accrues unevenly across parcels; agencies should plan for active negotiation with institutional investors during the consolidation phase rather than passive observation.

13. Successes

The Linen District redevelopment has produced an unusual concentration of successes for a small urban renewal effort:

- **National recognition for an anchor adaptive-reuse project** — The Modern Hotel’s coverage in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Vogue, the Los Angeles Times, and Dwell, and its Preservation Idaho award. [12, 14, 15]
- **A nationally-cited brownfields leverage ratio** — every \$1 of federal Brownfields funds at the Linen Building site leverages more than \$48 of total district investment. [5]
- **A federally-recognized brownfields case study** — Smart Growth America’s documentation of the Linen Building case as a template for federal brownfields redevelopment policy, including its citation in advocacy for the BUILD Act sponsored by Senator Mike Crapo. [5]
- **The founding of a nationally-recognized music festival** — Treefort Music Fest’s origin in the Linen District, with the festival now drawing more than 20,000 daily attendees and approximately \$11 million in annual economic impact. [23, 24, 25, 35]
- **Successful Smart Growth award** to David Hale for the Linen District redevelopment effort. [10]
- **A second-generation institutional investment wave** — the \$340+ million of new development (Broadstone Saratoga, Hotel Renegade, The Sparrow) anchoring the district’s transition from pioneer adaptive reuse to consolidated mixed-use neighborhood. [22]
- **Successful public-private participation-program coordination** — CCDC’s coordination of the Linen Blocks Grove Street streetscape with the Broadstone Saratoga, Hotel Renegade, and Sparrow private developments, completed October 2025. [16]



- **Successful preservation-based occupancy of the namesake building** — the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence’s mission-driven occupation of the Linen Building as both office and event venue. [1]
- **Innovation in mobility infrastructure** — the raised-bike-lane design on the 11th Street Bikeway, novel for Boise, preserving approximately 80 percent of on-street parking while delivering an all-ages, all-abilities protected facility. [19]

14. Lessons Learned

Developer concentration and brand discontinuity. The Linen District’s reliance on a single patient-capital developer for the first decade meant that, when Hale sold the Linen Building in 2014 and shifted his focus away from the district, it lost its de facto convener. No equivalent institutional voice has replaced Hale’s role; the district’s brand identity has drifted, the district’s boundaries have become inconsistent across sources, and decisions about retail-tenant mix, district programming, and brand stewardship have lacked a unified champion since approximately 2015. ***The lesson: where a single developer is the founding patient-capital actor, the urban renewal agency should anticipate the eventual exit of that developer and plan for institutional brand-stewardship succession five to ten years before it is needed.***

Pace of change. The Linen District has taken twenty years to mature from initial vision (2005) to second-generation consolidation (the mid-2020s). This is the typical timeline for patient-capital adaptive reuse work; it is faster than some comparable cases nationwide but slower than redevelopment with major federal infrastructure grants. ***The lesson: realistic time horizons for small developer-led districts should be measured in decades, not years.***

The highway couplet has not been resolved. Despite the 2013 Speck analysis, the 2015 Boise Elevated business analysis, the 2017 Sam Schwartz alternatives analysis, and a decade of CCDC negotiation, Front and Myrtle remain five-lane one-way state highways carrying 30,000+ vehicles per day through the district’s southern edge. The near-term improvements (curb extensions, signal retiming, leading pedestrian intervals, the Pioneer Corner pathway connection) are meaningful but modest. ***The lesson: a primary highway through a redevelopment district is a multi-decade negotiation; agencies should pursue near-term mitigation aggressively while accepting that fundamental reconfiguration may take a generation.*** [6, 7, 8, 20, 38, 39]

Lack of formal governance. The absence of a BID, formal property assessment district, or formal district-management organization has meant that no single entity is responsible for brand stewardship, district marketing, retail-tenant recruitment, or coordinated programming. Each function is performed (or not) by whichever stakeholder is motivated at any given moment. ***The lesson: small districts embedded in larger areas should consider lightweight district-management contracts (perhaps administered by***



the urban renewal agency) rather than full BID formation, recognizing that the cost and support of full BID formation may exceed the benefit and political calculus at the six-block scale.

Parking management challenges. Even with the 11th Street Bikeway preserving most on-street parking, surface parking lots remain dominant on multiple full blocks within and immediately adjacent to the district. The block bounded by Grove, 10th, Front, and 11th Streets (formerly the Boise Farmers Market site, now Yanke family-owned surface parking primarily serving JR Simplot Company employees) and the block bounded by Grove, 12th, Main, and 13th Streets (Idaho Power employee parking) are zoned C-5 for unlimited-density mixed-use redevelopment but remain surface parking. The Hendricks Commercial Properties acquisitions, which CEO Rob Gerbitz told BoiseDev, “we definitely bought them not to keep them as parking lots into the future,” signal that institutional capital is beginning to consolidate parking-lot inventory for future redevelopment, but timelines remain uncertain. ***The lesson: surface parking inventory often outlasts the urban renewal agency’s first-generation interventions; an explicit parking-conversion strategy (whether through structured parking replacement, zoning incentives, or direct agency-led acquisition) is needed in the agency’s second-generation work.*** [11]

Coordination across multiple urban renewal districts. The Linen District’s location at the boundary between RMOB and Westside has required cross-district administrative coordination. This is workable but has produced occasional confusion about which district funds which project. ***The lesson: where a district sits at an urban renewal boundary, the agency should consider boundary adjustment or formal cross-district project administration protocols rather than informal coordination.***

Wayfinding and visitor orientation. The district’s informal brand has produced inconsistent boundaries (variously described as 13th–16th between Main and Front, or extended further north and east, depending on the source). Visitor orientation has improved with the Grove Street Interpretive Signage and Neon Grove programs, but remains weaker than at districts with formal BID-funded wayfinding. ***The lesson: an agency should fund consistent district wayfinding as part of its capital-improvement program, including district-edge identification, gateway treatments, and interpretive signage.***

Tension with the original Boise Farmers Market. The block at 10th and Grove, which formerly hosted the Boise Farmers Market, has lost its market programming and now serves as surface parking. The market itself has relocated to other sites. The loss of recurring weekly programming at the district’s eastern edge weakened the daytime weekend draw. ***The lesson: where a small district has a recurring program — a farmers market, a craft fair, a regular event — preserving that program’s location during redevelopment should be an explicit goal of agency planning.***

Treefort Main Stage relocation. The relocation of the Treefort Main Stage from its original 12th-and-Grove location to Julia Davis Park, while justified by the festival’s growth, removed the festival’s center of gravity from the Linen District. The district remains a Treefort venue, but is no longer the festival’s principal anchor. ***The lesson: when a district hosts a flagship event in its early years, the agency should***



anticipate the event's growth and plan to either expand the district's venue capacity (so the event can scale in place) or accept that the event will eventually outgrow the district.

15. Opportunities and the Path Forward

As of mid-2026, the Linen District's path forward includes:

- **The continued buildout of the 11th Street Bikeway and the Grove Street streetscape.** Both projects are now completed, but the resulting north-south and east-west protected-bicycle and pedestrian network requires ongoing maintenance, signal-timing optimization, and integration with the broader downtown mobility plan. [17, 19]
- **The eventual redevelopment of surface parking blocks** within and adjacent to the district, including the Yanke family parcels at 10th/Grove, the Idaho Power parcel at 12th/Grove, and the Hendricks Commercial Properties holdings. [11]
- **The continued evolution of the Front and Myrtle couplet.** Long-term discussions of two-way reversion, lane reduction, and additional pedestrian and cyclist crossings continue; near-term improvements continue through ITD resurfacing cycles. The proposed Capitol Boulevard Concept (Vista Avenue to the Greenbelt), the eventual passenger-rail return to Boise's Boise Depot (if pursued), and the broader downtown freeway-to-boulevard discussion will each affect the couplet's future. [6, 7, 8, 33]
- **The State Street Corridor redevelopment.** Initiated by City Council Resolution 228-19 on June 4, 2019, the State Street District represents the urban renewal agency's next major corridor effort, intended to convert State Street from an auto-dominated commercial corridor into a series of walkable, mixed-use activity centers with high-quality transit service. The State Street effort will complement the Linen District by extending its catchment area northwest. [29, 30]
- **The maturation of the 30th Street District** (formed December 2012), which runs through the West End along Whitewater Park Boulevard. The 30th Street District directly addresses areas vacated when the I-184 Connector freeway opened in 1992, displacing auto-oriented businesses. [26, 28]
- **The continued growth of the Treefort Music Fest** and the district's role as one of the festival's venue networks rather than its center of gravity. [25, 36]
- **Boise's continued population and employment growth.** Boise has consistently ranked among the fastest-growing U.S. cities in the 2010s and 2020s; its population grew faster than that of nearly any other large U.S. city during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2026 announcement of Micron Technology's \$15 billion investment in a Boise plant is a defining regional economic event in recent years. [42]

Recommendations:



The Boise Linen District case yields a set of staged, sequenced recommendations transferable to other small light-industrial redevelopment contexts, particularly districts characterized by an active freight rail corridor, a primary U.S. highway, and a working-industrial-to-mixed-use transition led primarily by patient private capital.

Stage 1 (Years 1–3): Establish Standing, Identify Anchor Buildings, and Pursue Brownfields Funding

- 1. Inventory the industrial assets and identify the named anchor.** Catalog every building, parcel, and surface-parking lot in the district. Identify the one or two buildings whose names, histories, or industrial uses are most distinctive — these are the candidates for the district’s eventual brand. The Linen Building was a single 11,683-square-foot industrial laundry building with a documented seven-decade operating history and a unique national feature (a geothermal-water laundry operation). A comparable named anchor in the agency’s own district should be identified at this stage.
- 2. Pursue federal brownfields funding aggressively and early.** The EPA’s Brownfield Assessment and Cleanup Grant programs are the most replicable element of the Linen District case. The 2001 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant on the Linen Building site produced the environmental clarity that broke a two-decade developer-avoidance deadlock. Brownfields funding typically runs in the \$200,000 to \$1 million range per site for assessment and cleanup grants; the leverage ratio in the Linen Building case was more than 48:1. Agencies should pursue Brownfield Assessment Grants on every potentially contaminated parcel in the district, not just the largest. The federal BUILD Act expanded brownfields funding and remains the principal funding vehicle.
- 3. Engage one patient-capital private developer early.** Identify a developer with the patience, capital structure, and personal commitment to undertake multi-building adaptive reuse over a ten-to-twenty-year horizon. The agency’s role at this stage is permitting, brownfields support, and tolerance for unpolished early phases — not direct vertical investment.
- 4. Defer formal zoning or design-review tightening.** The Linen District’s first decade benefited from zoning that allowed studio, light-manufacturing, food and beverage, and retail uses by right. Premature design review or form-based code adoption can preclude the pioneer phase tenants who are essential to district formation.
- 5. Begin the conversation with the state highway department immediately.** If the district contains a primary U.S. highway (whether as a couplet or a single highway), initiate contact with the state highway department in Year 1. The Boise experience suggests that state highway department cooperation requires five to ten years of relationship-building before significant redesign is possible. Joint funding of an alternatives analysis is a useful early move.

Stage 2 (Years 3–7): Anchor Programming, Hospitality, and the First Public-Realm Investments



- 1. Welcome and support a recurring annual or seasonal festival.** Treefort Music Fest's establishment in the Linen District in 2012 — three years after the district's anchor buildings were renovated — was the single most identity-defining event in the district's history. Agencies should be receptive to early-stage festivals founded by local cultural organizers; the agency's role is to facilitate street closures, permit the temporary use of vacant parcels, and provide modest financial support, not to organize the festival itself.
- 2. Encourage and support a boutique-hospitality anchor.** A single distinctive hotel — preferably an adaptive-reuse rather than ground-up project — is the most reliable evening-and-overnight anchor for a small district. The Modern Hotel's 39-room renovation of a 1962 Travelodge demonstrates that even mid-century motor lodge inventory can be successfully repositioned without demolition. Agencies should facilitate (through entitlement processing, parking-requirement flexibility, and, where applicable, participation-program reimbursements for public improvements) such hospitality projects.
- 3. Make a first public-realm investment that visibly elevates the district.** A streetscape project on the district's principal east-west or north-south spine — Grove Street in the Linen District's case — establishes that the public sector is committed. The Linen District benefited from the 11th Street Bikeway and the Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street project; comparable first investments in another district might be in the \$5–15 million range, depending on scale.

Stage 3 (Years 7–15): Build Out the Public Realm and Bridge the Highway Barrier

- 1. Adopt a layered, multi-source funding stack for capital projects.** The Linen Blocks on Grove Street project was funded primarily through CCDC's TIF revenues in the RMOB district. The 11th Street Bikeway was jointly funded with ACHD. The Front and Myrtle Alternatives Analysis was jointly funded with the City, ACHD, COMPASS, and ITD. Multi-source funding both reduces single-agency exposure and produces shared political ownership of the resulting work.
- 2. Engineer the highway interface as the district's principal infrastructure problem.** Where a primary U.S. highway runs through the district, treat the highway interface as the agency's single most important multi-decade engineering project. Near-term improvements (curb extensions, leading pedestrian intervals, signal retiming, additional crosswalks, raised median islands) can be implemented during state resurfacing cycles without requiring major redesign approval. Longer-term improvements (lane reduction, two-way reversion, partial freeway removal) require sustained advocacy and may take a generation. The Pioneer Pathway model — building a continuous mobility connection that bypasses rather than crosses the highway barrier — is the most reliable interim strategy.
- 3. Integrate public art into transportation infrastructure from day one.** CCDC's investments in Neon Grove, the BSU student-artist "art ports," and the Treefort Footprint Public Artist Designed Infrastructure each cost a small fraction of the underlying streetscape budget but provided



gateway-quality district identity. A 1 percent commitment to public art on every capital project should be the agency's default position.

- 4. Build the bicycle and pedestrian network as the district's principal connective tissue.** The 11th Street Bikeway's raised-bike-lane design — protected from auto traffic, separated from pedestrians by a furnishings zone, and preserving 80 percent of on-street parking — is replicable in any constrained downtown right-of-way. The Pioneer Pathway's success demonstrates that continuous walking and biking connections from the river or trail network into the district can be built using a combination of public right-of-way and negotiated private easements through large institutional landowners.
- 5. Develop participation-program agreements with major private developments.** CCDC's Participation Program partners with the Broadstone Saratoga, Hotel Renegade, and The Sparrow, allowing the agency to coordinate adjacent private investment with the public-realm work, multiplying the visible district-level benefit. Agencies should develop standardized Participation Program templates (Types 1-4 in CCDC's nomenclature) before they are needed.

Stage 4 (Years 15+): Anticipate Institutional Consolidation and Brand Succession

- 1. Anticipate the original developer's eventual exit.** The Linen District's most underappreciated lesson is that a developer-dominated district will eventually lose its founding developer's day-to-day convening role — through an asset sale, generational transition, or a shift in focus. Agencies should anticipate this transition five to ten years in advance and identify institutional brand-stewardship successors (a downtown business association, a property-owner consortium, or an agency-staffed district-management role).
- 2. Plan for institutional capital consolidation.** The post-2020 wave of \$340+ million in construction in the Linen District (Broadstone Saratoga, Hotel Renegade, The Sparrow) was the predictable consequence of 15 years of pioneering adaptive reuse. Agencies should not be surprised by this consolidation, but should actively negotiate during it — through participation-program agreements, design-review processes, and ground-floor retail commitments — to ensure the district's character is not lost.
- 3. Develop a long-term parking-lot conversion strategy.** Surface parking inventory persists longer than most agencies anticipate. The Linen District's full-block parking lots at 10th/Grove and 12th/Grove remain in 2026 despite C-5 zoning allowing unlimited-density mixed-use redevelopment. Explicit agency-led strategies — structured parking replacement, zoning incentives, agency acquisition, or active courtship of institutional landowners — are required.
- 4. Steward the brand actively.** Where no BID exists, the urban renewal agency should fund consistent district wayfinding, interpretive signage, public art commissions, and district-edge identification. These functions are the district's de facto brand infrastructure in the absence of a formal brand-management entity.



- 5. Plan for the second-generation capital project.** A successful first-generation set of infrastructure projects (streetscape, bikeway, public realm) typically requires a second-generation follow-on (greenway extension, additional bike/pedestrian connections, transit integration, second-phase public art) approximately ten years later. Begin the planning, environmental, and financing work for the second-generation project before the first generation's completion.

Disclaimers

Cost figures for individual catalytic projects are cited from public sources and may vary across reports. The Broadstone Saratoga total development cost is cited at approximately \$100 million; the cumulative



new construction in the immediate area in 2023–2025 is cited at approximately \$340 million per Idaho Business Review reporting; the 11th Street Bikeway and Rebuild Linen Blocks on Grove Street project costs are within CCDC’s published capital improvement plan, but specific final-cost figures were not consolidated for this paper.

The federal brownfields leverage ratio cited (every \$1 of federal Brownfields funds leveraging more than \$48 of total downstream investment) is from Smart Growth America’s published case study and reflects analysis as of approximately 2016. The actual ratio in later years, particularly after the Broadstone Saratoga and Hotel Renegade investments, is likely higher.

The boundaries of the Linen District are not formally defined. The most cited boundary (six blocks between 13th and 16th Streets, Main Street to Front Street) is used throughout this paper, but several sources use broader boundaries.

The Linen District is one of many possible case studies in patient-capital, developer-led small-district redevelopment. Other comparable cases would offer complementary lessons.

Sources and References

The numbered references below correspond to inline citation markers throughout the paper (e.g., [4] refers to source 4). All URLs were accessed and verified during research conducted.



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