



REDEVELOPMENT REPORT

A Housing And Urban Development Slum & Blight Assessment

JUNE
2017



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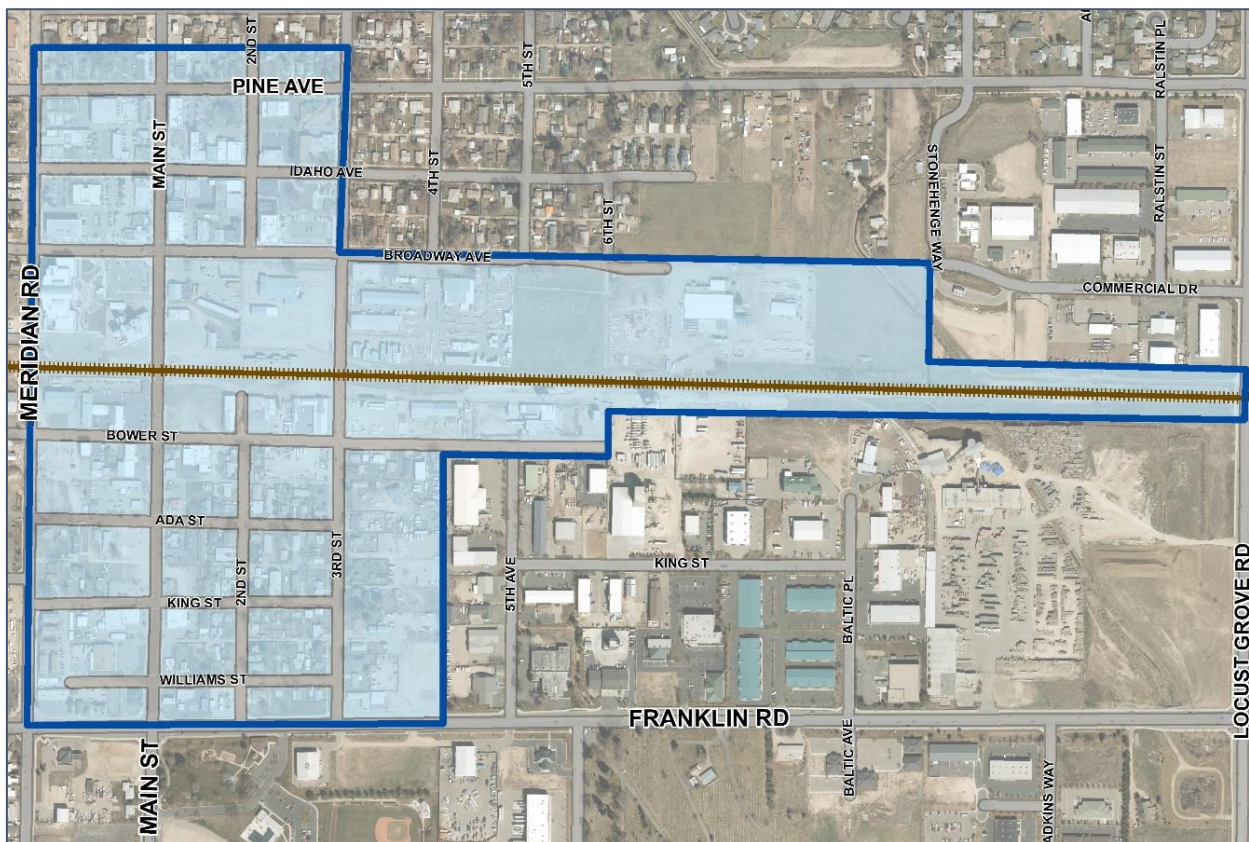
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2017, the City of Meridian initiated a slum and blight inventory assessment of several properties within the downtown area. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate whether the study area, or redevelopment area, shown in **Figure 1**, displays “Slum and Blight” conditions as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Idaho State Code Title 50, Chapter 20, Section 50-2009; Idaho State Code Title 50, Chapter 29, Section 8; and further defined at the local level through this study process. If 25% or more properties within the redevelopment area meet the criteria for slum and blight, the City of Meridian would attain the opportunity to utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement funds to prevent or eliminate slum and blight conditions within the redevelopment area. After collecting all pertinent data, photos and performing onsite field inspections, the overall assessment of the area concluded that 78 of the 212 (36.79%) properties evaluated fell within the fair to poor rating category.

FIGURE 1: STUDY AREA



Slum and Blight Criteria and Qualifications

In order to meet the criteria for slum and blight under HUD’s definition, the “designated area” which the activity occurs must meet the definition of slum, blighted, deteriorated or deteriorating area under state or local law. The area must meet either one of two principle conditions:

1. Public Improvements throughout the area are in a general state of deterioration; or
2. At least 25% of the properties throughout the area must exhibit one or more of the following:
 - Physical deterioration of buildings/improvements
 - Abandonment of properties
 - Chronic high occupancy turnover rates or chronic high vacancy rates in commercial or industrial buildings
 - Significant declines in property values or abnormally low property values relative to other areas in the community; or
 - Known or suspected environmental contamination

Based on field inspections, photos, and documentation collected, the redevelopment area shown in **Figure 1** meets the HUD definition for slum and blight. The assessment concludes that more than 25% (36.79%) of the properties inventoried exhibit at least one of the above principle conditions, are in either fair or poor condition, display a general state of deterioration, and thus satisfy the state and local criteria for slum and blight.

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1893, the City of Meridian was once known for its farming and dairy presence throughout the state. As the fastest-growing city in Idaho, Meridian’s population has increased by 81.5% since 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau). The City’s agricultural history is remembered and celebrated during the Meridian Dairy Days annual event. The interurban railway was developed in 1908 as a means to ship dairy and fruit, and to provide convenient transportation for residents. Meridian, positioned around the railway, has since become the “Center of the Treasure Valley” and central hub for commercial and retail development in southwest Idaho.



The City of Meridian, now home to an estimated 98,300 people [Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS)], receives an annual CDBG distribution from HUD as an entitlement city. CDBG resources help fund various activities including the prevention or elimination of slum and blight. The section of downtown Meridian identified in **Figure 1** was selected as the area to evaluate for slum and blight conditions. There is a mixture of commercial, industrial and residential properties throughout the study area. Some of the City’s oldest structures are located within the slum and blight study area. The historic and community-recognized properties throughout the study area demonstrate a place of historical importance, as well as an area going through transition. A combination of age, lack of newer development, competing outer growth and declining infrastructure contribute to the visible deterioration displayed throughout the study area. The slum and blight designation in this area would provide the opportunity to utilize CDBG entitlement funds to prevent or eliminate slum and blight conditions within the redevelopment area.



METHODOLOGY

The methodology to conduct this assessment was developed through a collaborative effort among City of Meridian staff and consultants that made up the overall project committee.

State and Local Slum and Blight (Substandard) Criteria

A definition of “substandard area” was developed by the committee based upon criteria defined by HUD, Idaho State Code 50-2903 (8) (b), and Meridian City Code, as well as a review of studies performed by neighboring cities.

The qualifying factors per state and local definition include:

- ❖ The existence of buildings and structures, or any part thereof, used or intended to be used for residential, commercial, industrial or other purposes, or any combination of those uses, which is conducive to ill health or endangers life by any cause.
- ❖ The existence of inadequate infrastructure, public facilities, open spaces lacking accessibility or usefulness; streetscape and faulty lot layouts which contribute to the economic underdevelopment and deterioration of the area.

- ❖ The economic underutilization of property resulting from inadequate planning, zoning or building code enforcement, such as obsolete platting, deterioration of structures or improvements, and diversity of ownership impairing sound growth of the surrounding community.
- ❖ Continued depreciation and disinvestment to such an extent that the continued deterioration of the area negatively impacts the social and economic infrastructure of surrounding neighborhoods.
- ❖ A loss of investment, population and utilization of an area, resulting in continued deterioration and added costs to the taxpayer for the creation of new public facilities, infrastructure and services elsewhere.
- ❖ A state in which, by any reason, property is disadvantaged in the ability to attract private investment causing hindrance on the continued growth of the community.

A document containing the Local Slum and Blight (Substandard) Criteria is included in **Appendix A**.

Study Area

In order to define the study area, core areas of concern were first identified by the committee. The study area focused primarily on downtown properties located outside of existing low-to-moderate (LMI) areas. Furthermore, natural features and barriers including principal arterial roadways (Meridian Road, Pine Avenue and Franklin Road) and the rail corridor further distinguished the study area. A thorough assessment of existing conditions (i.e. sidewalk gaps, capital improvement projects, etc.) and a review of qualified LMI boundaries, the committee established the study area shown in **Figure 1**. In total, the study area encompasses 141.92 acres and approximately 280 individual parcels including a mix of residential, commercial, industrial and vacant properties.

The boundaries of a study (Slum and Blighted) area were determined by the domination of properties exhibiting neglect, abuse, or misuse. An area is presumed to be “dominated” by properties exhibiting these contributing factors if [no less than 50% of the properties within the area exhibit two or more of the eight conditions listed below OR no less than 25% of properties within the area exhibit three or more of the eight conditions listed below]. Conditions indicating neglect, abuse and/or misuse of property include, but are not strictly limited to, the above criteria as well as those factors noted in **Appendix A**.

Meridian’s downtown district satisfies the state criterion through a combination of deteriorated or deteriorating structures, predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, accessibility and usefulness

and the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes resulting in the economic underdevelopment of the area substantially impairing the sound growth of the City of Meridian and retarding the provision of housing accommodations, and which constitutes an economic liability.

Additionally, the area meets both of the conditions below (see **Findings** on Page 7 for detailed information):

Public improvements throughout the area are in a general state of deterioration; and by having at least 25% of the properties throughout the area exhibit one of more of the following:

- Physical deterioration of buildings/improvements;
- Abandonment of properties;
- Chronic high occupancy turnover rates or chronic high vacancy rates in commercial or industrial buildings;
- Significant declines in property values or abnormally low property values relative to other areas in the community; or
- Known or suspected environmental contamination.

Or

- The public improvements throughout the area are in general state of deterioration.

Field Inventory

Once the definition of a substandard area was established and the study area identified, a slum and blight inventory form was developed. The inventory form captures the established local slum and blight criteria by separating each contributing factor individually. Data collected using the inventory form included: parcel number, property address, land use description, building age/year built, and property characteristics contributing to slum and blight conditions. An unmarked inventory form is included in **Appendix B** for reference. An Inventory Information Spreadsheet (**Appendix C**) was then developed to input field data from the inventory forms to provide both a historical point of reference for the City, and to produce a visual map of the data utilizing Geographic Information System (GIS).

Field work commenced once the study area, local slum and blight criteria, inventory form, and inventory information spreadsheet were collaboratively established and finalized by the committee. Within the study area, 21 properties are owned/used for public purposes, including the City of Meridian, Ada County Highway District (ACHD), Idaho Power and Nampa Meridian Irrigation District, etc. These properties were excluded from the in-field study, but were factored into the overall slum and blight study area percentage (see **Figure 3**). Property photos were taken to capture each contributing factor documented at each property within the redevelopment boundary. The pictures were then linked to the inventory forms digitally for reference and all information collected from each property was added to the inventory information spreadsheet and uniquely identified by parcel number and physical address. Based upon the data collected, each property was then determined to be in excellent, good, fair, or poor

condition. A numeric rating system was established to delineate the overall rating for each property. The scale shown in **Figure 2** was used.

FIGURE 2 – SLUM AND BLIGHT RATING SCALE

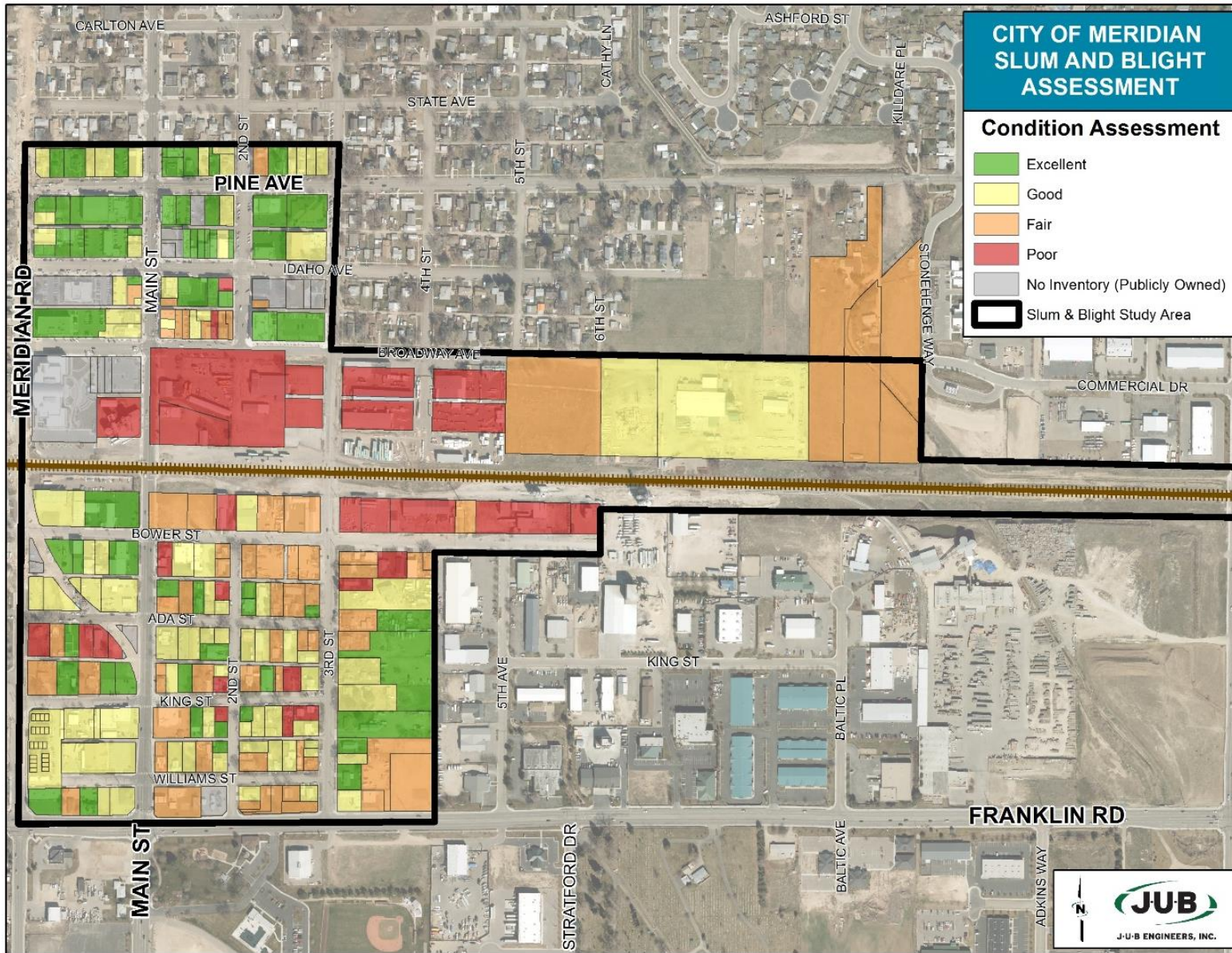


Properties falling within the fair or poor rating scale qualify for slum and blight, per local definition.

Figure 3 shows the condition assessment results. **Appendix D** includes a map book reflecting parcel numbers and conditions, along with completed inventory forms. A web-based GIS map file with clickable links containing inventory data can be accessed here: <http://arcg.is/0e0Lfy>

The City’s Planning Division Manager, Caleb Hood, who has code interpretation authority oversight, conducted, and certified all inventory assessments for each property reviewed in this study.

FIGURE 3 – CONDITION ASSESSMENT RESULTS



FINDINGS

The results of the assessment demonstrate that 36.79% of the properties evaluated meet the City’s slum and blight, or “substandard” criteria. HUD defines a redevelopment area by economic underdevelopment, deterioration of property, inadequate, unimproved and underperforming infrastructure, amenities and facilities, or any combination of these contributing factors that could be detrimental to the public’s safety, health or welfare.

The local highway jurisdiction, ACHD, maintains roughly 4.6 miles of paved roadway including local, collector, and arterial roadways within the study area. In addition to the roadway, an estimated 23,945 linear feet of existing sidewalks and an additional 10,246 linear feet of sidewalk gaps exist within the redevelopment area.

A total of 212 slum and blight inventory forms and several supporting pictures were documented on-site through a collaborative effort between consultants and City of Meridian staff. Approximately 48 parcels were not assigned individual inventory forms but were instead combined with other adjacent properties due to their related ownership status and/or existing land use.

Using the rating system outlined herein, properties exhibiting four or more slum and blight characteristics rated either fair or poor and were considered eligible for slum and blight designation. The overall assessment of the area demonstrates that 78 of the 212 (36.79%) properties evaluated fall within the fair to poor rating category.

Contributing Factor Results

The top three leading factors that contribute to the slum and blight conditions within the study area include:

1. Contributing Factor 5B (Sidewalks) – Damaged or Missing Sidewalk, 94 Properties. See **Figure 4**.
2. Contributing Factor 3A (Facades) – Facades Characterized by Cracks, Holes, Peeling and/or Discoloration, 88 Properties. See **Figure 5**.
3. Contributing Factor 5F (Landscaping) – Neglected Landscaping, 60 Properties. See **Figure 6**.



FIGURE 4 – CONTRIBUTING FACTOR (SIDEWALKS)

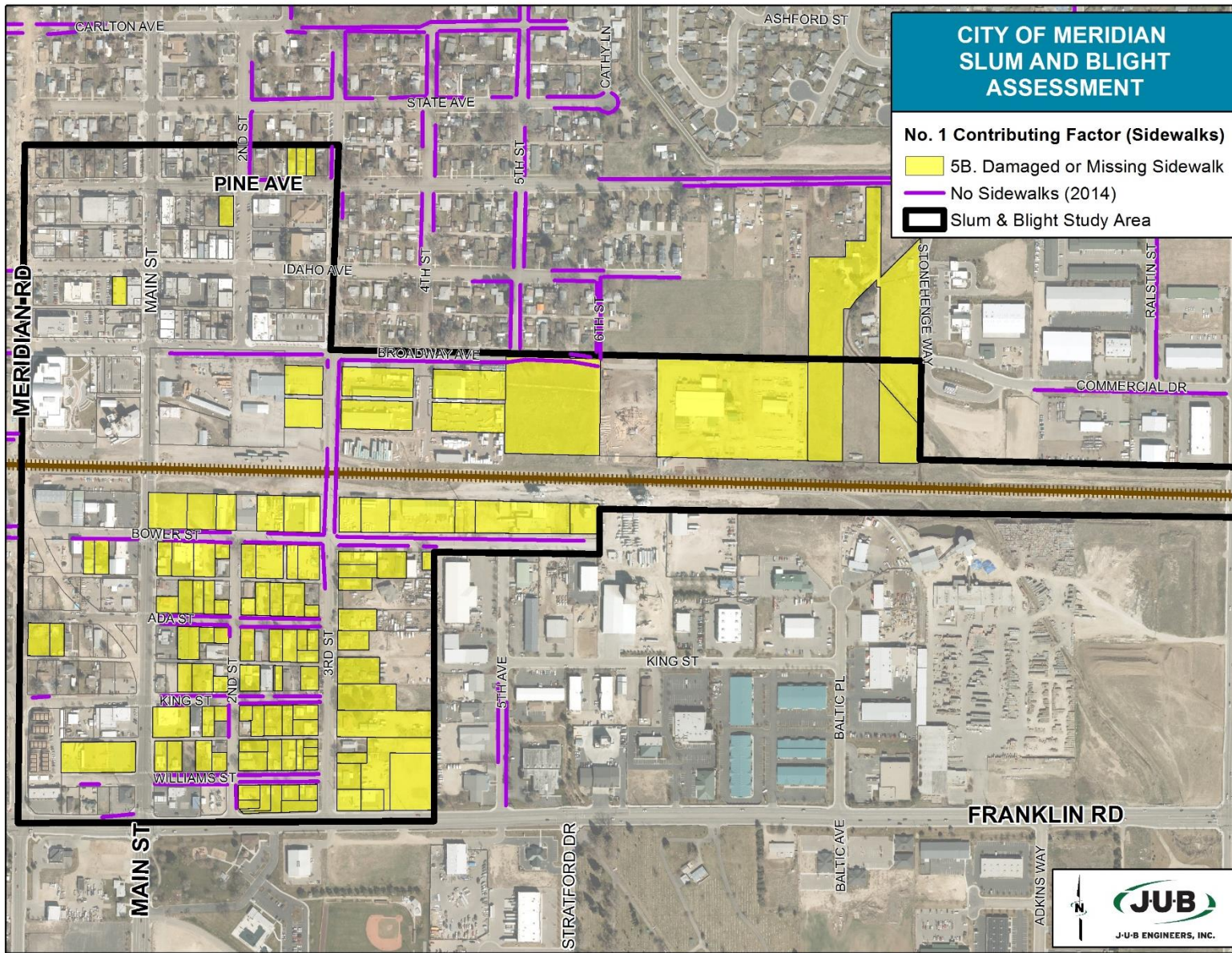


FIGURE 5 – CONTRIBUTING FACTOR (FACADES)

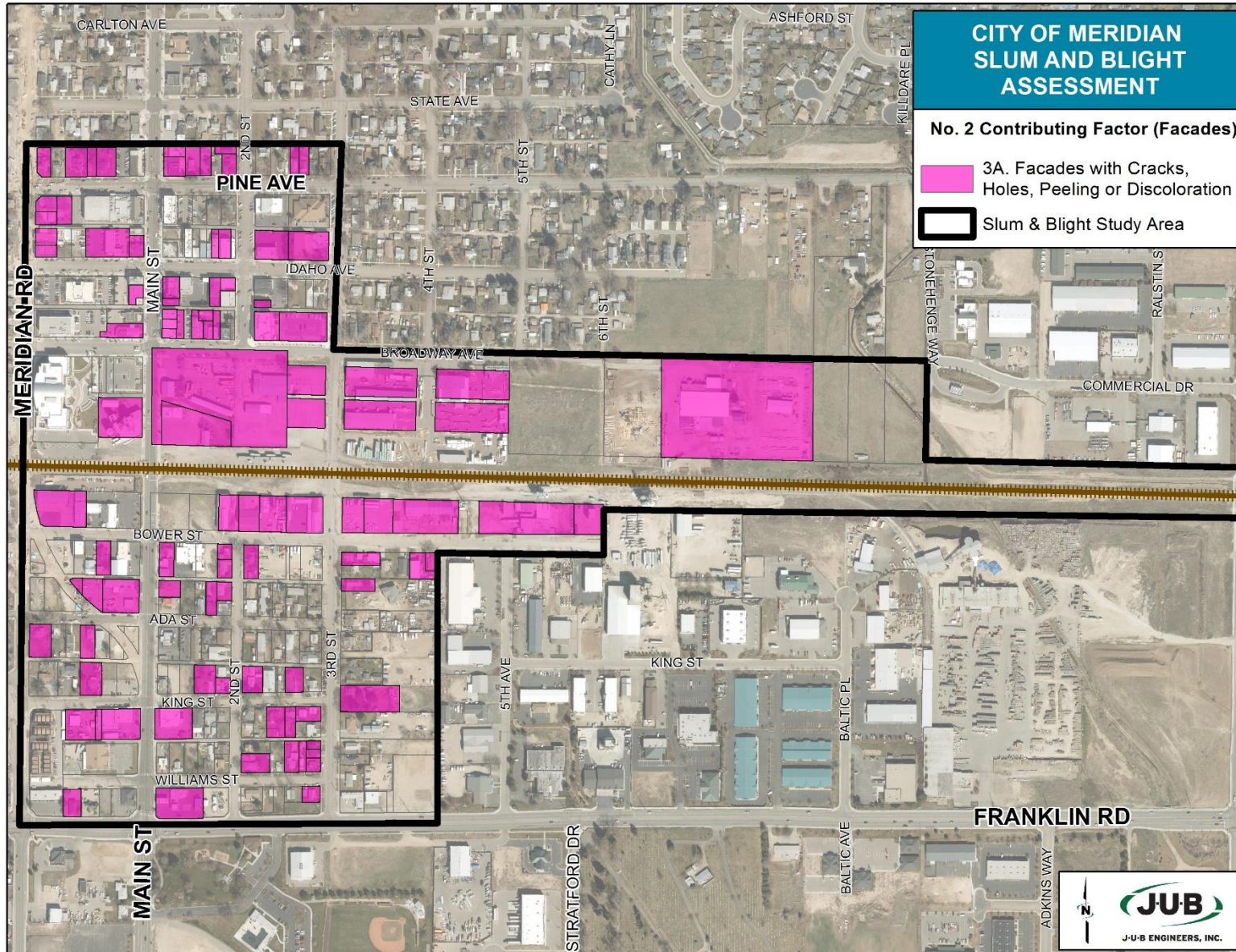
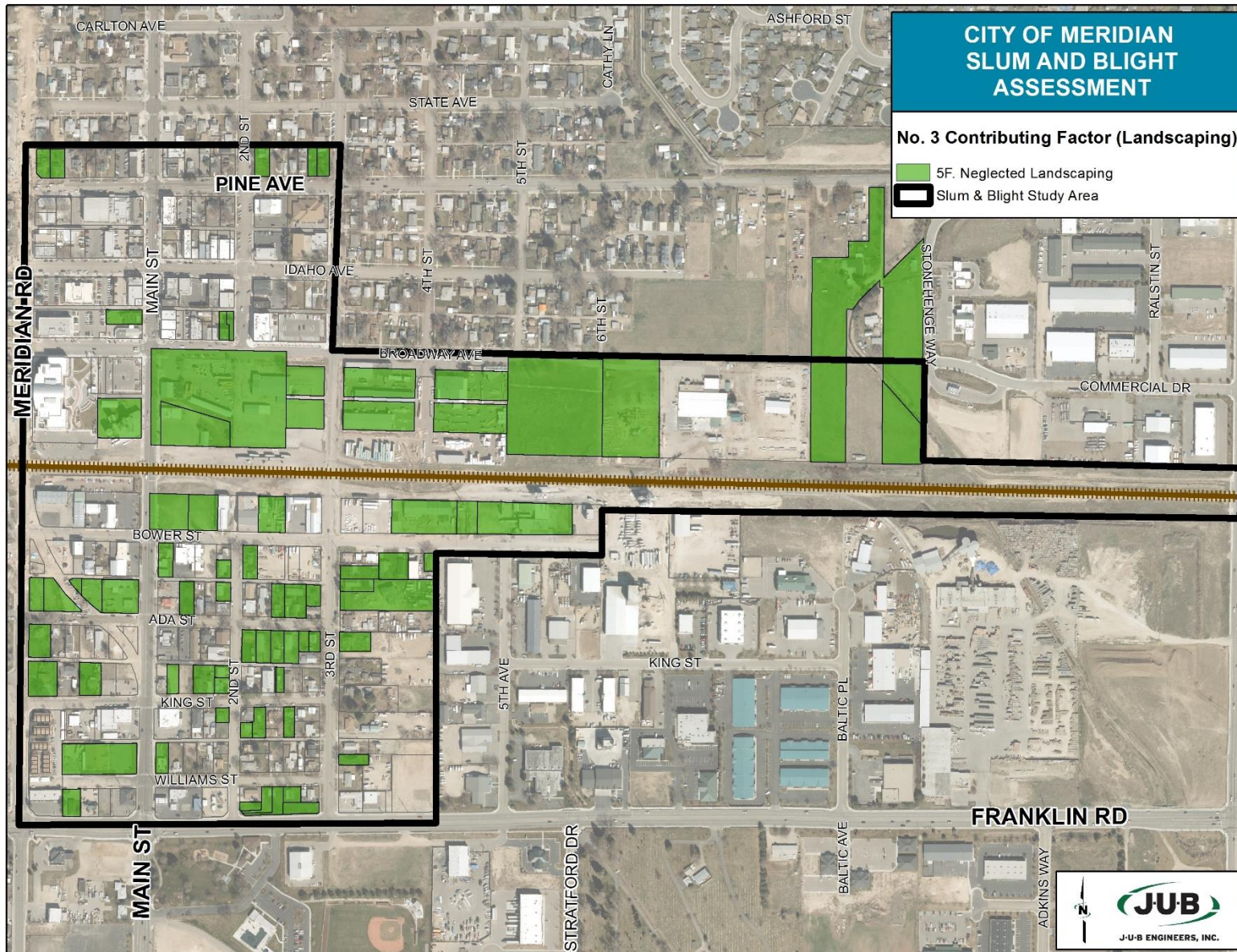


FIGURE 6 – CONTRIBUTING FACTOR (LANDSCAPING)



Conclusion

As shown in **Figure 3**, several properties along the north and south sides of the railroad corridor fall in the fair or poor category. The railroad corridor is predominately utilized for industrial and commercial purposes and makes up a significant share of land within the study area. Because of this, the rail corridor has a strong aesthetic impact on downtown Meridian and its surrounding uses.

The findings of this assessment establish a strong basis for defining the study area as a mix of older properties and intermittent newer development that presents characteristics often associated with slum and blight.

Throughout the area, inconsistent infrastructure exists including sidewalks, curb, lighting, parking, landscaping, and roadway improvements. As shown in **Figure 4**, 1.94 miles of sidewalk gaps exist in the study area, along with damaged, aged, cracked, up-rooted and non-compliant ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) public facilities present throughout.

Residential land uses occur throughout the study area, primarily concentrated south of the railroad tracks and east of Meridian Road. While this area is clearly defined by its age and location, it also provides great potential. Of the properties inspected, 57.5 percent had structures 50 years or older, five of which are designated historic through the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Several of the structures contribute to the slum and blight of the area because of their age, but also due to sustained deferred maintenance and inadequate surrounding infrastructure. **Figure 5** shows that many of the older properties have façade-related contributing factors. **Figure 6** shows properties with neglected landscaping/property. The examples below depict actual field photos of properties within the study area that provide an illustration of the existing conditions within the residential neighborhoods.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement Projects

Improvement projects to address slum and blight conditions may include but are not limited to sidewalks, ADA ramps, façade improvements, drainage facilities, curb, gutter, and other public infrastructure. Improvements would typically be coordinated/addressed/funded by the Meridian Development Corporation (MDC), Meridian Arts Commission (in some instances), COMPASS, ACHD, Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) or other agencies. Private property owners may also be willing to help address substandard conditions. Public-private partnerships could also be explored to address slum and blight conditions.

FAÇADE PROGRAM

Façade improvement programs are a good way to encourage and promote private investment. The MDC has an existing façade improvement program¹ that could provide up to 50% in funding towards eligible projects that provide a public purpose or benefit. The City of Meridian could apply CDBG funds towards eligible projects if a viable opportunity arises, if funding levels permit, and as long as the project falls within the slum and blight redevelopment boundary.

SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Meridian, MDC and/or ACHD could allocate a certain amount of funding on an annual basis to go towards sidewalk improvements. A funding request can be made to ACHD each year through the annual project prioritization process. Funding requests can also be made to COMPASS through the Communities in Motion (CIM) program, or ITD through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).



¹ MDC Façade Improvement Application link: <http://www.meridiandevelopmentcorp.com/fy17-facade-improvement-application>

PROJECT COORDINATION & COLLABORATION

Table 1 includes a list of known planned and future improvements within the study area and identifies the possibility of leveraging CDBG funds to address slum and blight conditions.

Table 1 – Improvement Projects

Planned/ Possible Project Location	Description	Lead Agency	In Study Area	Expands Beyond Study Area	In URA Area	Possibility of leveraging CDBG funds
E 3rd St, Franklin Rd/Carlton St	Community Program: Construct streetscape improvements, including curb, gutter, sidewalk, and improved UPRR crossing, from Franklin Rd to Carlton Ave.	ACHD	X	X	X	Yes, there are documented sidewalk gaps, façade issues, and neglected landscaping within the project limits. See Figures 4, 5 & 6.
Main St, Central Dr/Fairview Ave	Micro-seal, pavement management project scheduled for 2017 construction.	ACHD	X	X	X	Not likely, 2017 construction; does not include any sidewalk improvements.
Railroad Corridor through downtown and beyond	A proposed pathway is identified for future development along the north side of the railroad corridor.	City of Meridian	X	X	X	Possibly, there are documented sidewalk gaps, façade issues, and neglected landscaping within the project limits. See Figures 4, 5 & 6.
Main St, Pine Ave/Carlton St	Historic lighting on both sides of Main Street. Design of this phase of a larger master lighting plan effort has recently been completed. Funds have yet to be officially allocated/budgeted for construction. Additionally, there are façade improvement applications in the works for El Tenapa and Slyce properties within this project area.	MDC	X	X	X	Possibly, façade issues are documented along Main Street within the project location. Lighting and the potential façade projects noted in the description would help with aesthetics and slum and blight conditions in the area. See Figure 5.
Pine Ave, Meridian Rd/Locust Grove Rd	Roadway improvements, sewer, water and irrigation improvements; historic lighting; and landscaping.	ACHD, City of Meridian & MDC	X	X	X	Possibly, there are documented sidewalk gaps, façade issues, and neglected landscaping within the project limits. See Figures 4, 5 & 6.
703 & 713 N Main St	Façade improvements: These projects are slated for a new, four-story, mixed-use development. These projects are slated for a new, four-story, mixed-use development. There is a Development Agreement in place for the project. 703 N Main will begin construction this summer (2017). 713 N Main is Phase II and will likely occur in 2019.	MDC	X		X	Yes, there are documented façade and neglected landscaping issues identified for these properties. See Figures 5 & 6.

On-going Evaluation

Table 2 includes a summary of recommended action items, descriptions and timing associated with slum and blight projects and inventory tracking.

Table 2 – Slum and Blight Projects and Inventory Tracking

Item	Description	Timing
Committee Meetings	Conduct regular committee meetings to discuss project programming, funding coordination, progress, etc.	Bi-Annually or Annually
Project Tracking	As projects are completed within the study area, update the Inventory Information Spreadsheet and Inventory Forms for tracking and reporting purposes.	Bi-Annually
Redevelopment Boundary	As projects and requests/interest for improvements occur, re-evaluate the redevelopment boundary for potential expansion. Once expanded, conduct inventory field work of the properties within the expanded redevelopment area and update Inventory Information Spreadsheet and GIS file to reflect the new redevelopment boundary and inventory results.	Annually
Local Definition	When and if the redevelopment boundary is expanded, re-evaluate the Local Definition for Slum and Blight conditions, Blank Inventory Form and Inventory Information Spreadsheet before conducting field work.	Annually (minimum); 5 years (maximum)
Inventory Form		
Inventory Information Spreadsheet		
GIS File	Update the GIS shape file to reflect new conditions as projects are completed.	Annually
Redevelopment Report	Update this Redevelopment Report when and if conditions change significantly within the study area and/or when and if the redevelopment area is expanded. This can be done in-house or with assistance from a consultant.	5 years

APPENDICES

A – Local Slum and Blight (Substandard) Criteria

B – Blank Inventory Form

C – Inventory Information Spreadsheet

D – Map Book & Inventory Forms

E – Resolutions

APPENDIX A

Local Slum and Blight (Substandard) Criteria

APPENDIX B

Blank Inventory Form

APPENDIX C

Inventory Information Spreadsheet

APPENDIX D

Map Book & Inventory Forms

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APPENDIX E

Resolutions



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

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