



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

ELECTING WISE CITY LEADERS COULD BRING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BACK TO IDAHO FALLS

Idaho Falls is a wonderful place to live. The people are friendly, the natural beauty is unmatched, the recreation is abundant and the quality of life is why many of us choose to live here.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the business climate was equally attractive?

Although there are many wonderful success stories of longstanding businesses in Idaho Falls, and we applaud these iconic companies, who could argue that we need more high-paying jobs and quality employers to provide increased economic opportunity for our community. In a way, the many vacant buildings throughout the city highlight this critical need. We can do better.

Compare Idaho Falls with Ammon and you have to ask yourself, "How did Idaho Falls end up losing its economic viability to Ammon?" One could reasonably conclude that years ago Ammon was at a huge disadvantage to Idaho Falls. Idaho Falls had almost all of the retail businesses, all of the top employers including INL, the courthouse, the hospital, and Melaleuca. And it was right off the freeway! Ammon had none of the above. It had virtually no economic viability, no freeway access, and was a long way from everywhere.

And yet businesses have been exiting Idaho Falls. They are moving to Ammon or to Bonneville County or selecting those locations over Idaho Falls. Retail businesses are even willing to give up freeway access in order to escape the downside of being within the city limits of Idaho Falls. No one appears interested in available premier locations downtown. What used to be the Savings Center, which is on the corner of Broadway and the Snake River, has stood vacant for years.

Idaho Falls isn't as healthy as it could be.

Unfortunately, we have not seen the end of the exodus. The more that companies leave Idaho Falls, the more depressed the area will become and the more companies will be forced to exit.

But it's not too late to reinvigorate Idaho Falls.

The Mayor and the City Council are the only ones who can fix the problem. The current members appear to be well-meaning, but some don't seem to understand that the City Council is primarily

the cause of the exodus. Three Council seats are up for election just a week from now. This election offers an excellent opportunity to get Idaho Falls back on track.

The exodus from Idaho Falls began many years ago. It stemmed from the unfriendly business attitude of many of the various city councils that have served for the past several decades. The attitude of previous city councils went something like this, "The city of Idaho Falls has the sewer. We have a monopoly here, and we can use it to our advantage. If businesses want to use the sewer system, they will have no choice but to annex into the system. They will then pay our taxes, and Idaho Falls will reap a huge increase in revenues."

But it just didn't work that way. Competition destroys monopolies! And competition came when the Shelley City sewer system changed everything.

Now companies can connect to the sewer system in Ammon and in Bonneville County. **The tax rates on both residences and businesses inside the City of Idaho Falls are nearly twice what they are in Bonneville**

County or Ammon. Both homeowners and businesses, including home builders, are paying attention. We forecast that unless something is done to remedy the disparity in tax burdens, more damage will be done. There are many other policies that need to change in order to bring Idaho Falls back to life. We believe it will take a new City Council to accomplish that.

It is important to note that the current City Council members who are up for reelection are decent, good people who have done their best. But we need new City Council members with the political will and expertise to redirect Idaho Falls from the antiquated policies and philosophies that have governed this formerly great city over the past few decades. The current City Council did not create the problem. But they are doing little to remedy it. If we want a stronger, more vibrant Idaho Falls, we can't afford to have City Council members that are entrenched in the policies of the past. We need leaders with new ideas and fresh thinking who understand how to grow a community.

The mayor, too, will play a critical role. We are particularly impressed with Rebecca Casper who is running for Mayor. We believe Rebecca would be a great improvement because her agenda focuses on key economic issues that will bring prosperity to Idaho Falls.

This election provides an opportunity to get Idaho Falls back on track.

Building back Idaho Falls will be difficult. We have lost a great deal, including retail businesses, attorneys, restaurants, commercial outlets, and Melaleuca. But we still have many resources. We can rebuild Idaho Falls and enjoy a vibrant economy. But it will take new leadership on the City Council. We hope that residents will get out to vote next Tuesday to rebuild this great city.