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Meridian mayor gives ‘State of City’

MERIDIAN — Mayor Tammy de Weerd delivered the Meridian State of the City address Thursday at Meridian Middle School. Information highlighted included: In the last 10 years, during which the population grew by 240 percent:

- The crime rate in Meridian decreased by 19 percent in 2009 and has dropped 45 percent overall in the last decade, making Meridian the safest community in Idaho over 30,000 people.
- Response times for the Meridian Fire Department have improved 20 percent to 4 minutes and 58 seconds from 6 minutes 10 seconds 10 years ago.
- City received an improved fire rating of 3 in the last year, up from a rating of 5 a decade ago.
- Commercial market value in Meridian has grown by 400 percent to a value of \$1.8 billion over the last 10 years.
- There are over 30,000 jobs in Meridian, more than doubling over the last decade.

In the year 2009:

- Meridian’s budget remained in the black as fiscal year 2009 budgeted revenue was slightly better than expected and exceeded expenses by almost \$400,000.
- 7 percent of the fiscal year 2009 budget was returned to the General Fund to be used for future capital improvements for police and fire.
- Meridian City Hall achieved LEED Silver certification.
- Idaho State University-Meridian opened in the fall of 2009 bringing 1,000 students, nearly 100 faculty and staff, and 27 degree programs.
- In 2009, 626 of the 1,331 or 47 percent of residential permits issued in Ada County were in the city of Meridian.
- More than 100 new businesses opened in Meridian in the last year.
- In 2009 the City purchased 77.7 acres of future parkland in South Meridian located near Locust Grove and Lake Hazel Roads.

In addition, De Weerd spoke about changes occurring in Meridian in the coming years:

- MDU Resources Group, the parent company to Intermountain Gas, will open a facility in the El Dorado Business Campus in 2010, creating 140 new jobs.
- The Portico of Meridian will be the new headquarters for Scentsy and ESI. Opening soon will be Ling & Louie’s Asian Bistro and a major destination hotel with more than 175 rooms and conference facilities in 2012.
- The City of Meridian’s Initial Point Gallery will host the Northwest for the National Watercolor Society’s prestigious traveling show beginning Sept. 10.

- The 60-plus acre Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park that is being donated to the city is at 30 percent design and expected to open in the summer of 2011. The overall \$25 million gift to the community will include a library and senior center.

“Meridian has advanced significantly as a community over the last decade, moving from a small town to a vibrant city — the third largest in Idaho. These advancements have been accomplished by a community willing to roll up its sleeves and work for a better tomorrow,” de Weerd said.