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## Planning workshop reaping changes

Post Falls' consultants alter developers' ideas

**Alison Boggs**  
Staff writer  
October 31, 2006

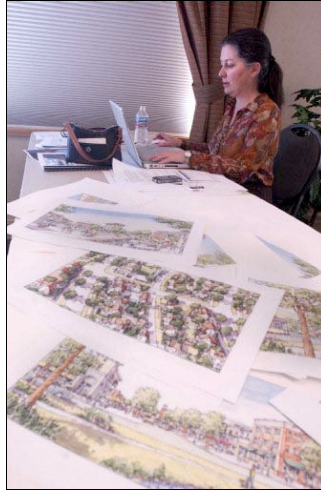
The city of Post Falls' weeklong planning exercise already is influencing development within the River City, almost before a team of consultants boards a plane today to return home.

About a dozen developers with plans for residential and commercial construction within the city spent time with planners with an eye on revising projects to be more inviting and pedestrian-friendly, and to explore additional housing options.

Vision First, the developer of a planned 500-acre mixed-used development at Highway 41 and Prairie Avenue, flew three people up from Boise for part of the week and now is working to mix in more walking trails, less obtrusive parking lots and more buildings with both residential and commercial uses, said the developer's North Idaho representative, Monte Risvold.

"By visiting with these people ... we're going to increase that in future phases," said Risvold, who represents the massive Tullamore and Prairie Crossing developments being planned by Vision First of Boise. "This has been a very valuable week."

Post Falls spent \$250,000 to bring in a team of planners from PlaceMakers, a national community-planning company that creates design standards for cities and towns based in part on what citizens value most. The city paid for the weeklong exercise with annexation fees – money paid by developers when a project is planned on newly annexed land. The fund has been paying for large planning studies for about 10 years, said Collin Coles, senior planner with the city.



**Susan Henderson, the design director for PlaceMakers in Albuquerque, N.M., was part of a team assisting Post Falls in coming up with proposed solutions to their City Center project and being smarter about growth patterns. The team held a public meeting Monday and shared some of its findings. (J. Bart Rayniak The Spokesman-Review )**

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The week's meetings were well-attended by developers

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attended by developers, citizens, attorneys and government officials, Coles said. Dozens of people filled out surveys rating a series of rural, urban and suburban images to help the planners determine what residents would like to see happen in Post Falls.

Among the city's goals were: creating a vibrant city center with housing, shops and restaurants; creating more public open space; and finding a balance between moving traffic and providing access to

businesses on the state Highway 41 corridor.

"This will give us tools to use as we move into the future," Coles said.

The exercise focused on the "SmartCode," a plan the city adopted last spring that calls for neighborhoods that have commercial centers, walking trails and places where people can live, work and recreate. The city wants to provide other options than the typical subdivision with its cul-de-sacs, street-facing garages and homes far from shopping and services.

Next, the PlaceMakers team will put together a "SmartCode" specific to Post Falls, which the City Council will consider approving. The goal, Coles said, is for SmartCode to become an alternative to the city's current zoning code.

Consultant Bill Dennis said the developers he spoke with are looking for alternatives. Some of those he met with last week said they wanted to incorporate some of the SmartCode features into their projects, but Post Falls' current code didn't allow it.

"Post Falls realized the need for a change of course a whole lot earlier than most cities do," said Susan Henderson, the project principal with PlaceMakers. "They've put a lot of thought into where they want to go."

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