

How did Hagerman IDEA, Inc. come to be?

Hagerman IDEA has its roots in the Gem Community Program conceived and promoted by the Idaho Department of Commerce beginning in 1988. Hagerman's Gem Committee was formed in the early 90s. To qualify for the program, which promised financial incentives in the form of grant funding, the community had to, among other things, conduct a community survey and develop a community improvement and development plan. The survey was accomplished with the help of CSI and the committee was the moving force behind new bathrooms in City Park and the first Thousand Springs Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. By the mid 1990s these initial projects had been completed and with their accomplishment the committee rested. At a time when new projects requiring more funding and significantly more community support, commitment and participation was waning and the committee had not even met for over a year.

In 1998 Jim Scott was appointed to the City Council and was not even aware of the Gem Program. He asked the Mayor to establish a committee charged with identifying community needs and developing projects that the city might undertake to address those needs. No mention was made by the Mayor or Council that there was a Gem Committee. And so a new committee dubbed the "Pro-Actions" committee was formed and, as a first step, the committee extracted and consolidated a list of needs identified in the community's comprehensive management plan. Then the committee identified projects that would address those needs.

It wasn't long before some of the community-minded people who had been active in the Gem program gravitated to the Pro-Actions committee and before long the committees merged and the new Pro-Actions Committee stepped into the role of Hagerman's Gem Community Committee. This move injected a bit of new life into the community's efforts to make headway on community betterment projects. Around this time the city was trying to get residents, businesses and the owners of vacant lots to clean up their property. A trailer dump station was located on a vacant city-owned lot along the main street in town. This weed-covered lot was a catch-all for all kinds of trash that the wind might deposit. The lot was littered with trash and covered with waist-high weeds and was certainly sending anything but a message to residents that the City was serious about cleaning up the town. And so, the initial project identified by the Pro-Actions committee was construction of a small pocket park on this vacant lot. With the blessing of the City, the committee applied for grants through the Gem program and the Idaho Community Foundation and obtained a financial contribution from the Hagerman Valley Chamber of Commerce. With the funds acquired and about 500 hours of local volunteer labor "Volunteer Park" was constructed. A downtown revitalization project was the next project in line. A couple of public meetings were held and a concept developed. There was more than one reason this project didn't move forward but perhaps the most significant was that again, a project had been successfully completed and instead of that being incentive to bite off another project interest began to fade. And so the problem was becoming clear, volunteers burn out and unlike larger communities, small towns don't have paid staff to take an idea for improvement of their community, develop it into a concept, build community support, create a plan, seek funding and oversee implementation a project.

By the late 1990s discussion among one group of people kept coming back to why can't we keep up the momentum and get projects done? The "Gem Community Program" manual indicated that the structure of local committees could range from simple citizen committees to formal community development corporations. Realizing that a non-profit corporation would present funding opportunities and might increase the credibility of the Committee, in 2001, a dozen individuals living in the Hagerman area each contributed \$400 to cover the cost of forming a

non-profit, tax exempt, Idaho charitable corporation modeled after the Jerome Development Corporation. They develop articles of incorporation, adopted by-laws, established a bank account, initiated financial recordkeeping, applied for tax exempt status with the IRS and filed with the Idaho Secretary of State. The stated purposes for Hagerman IDEA are to **I**mprove the quality of life of the area's citizens, **D**evelop the area's business resources, **E**ducate local citizens, and **A**ppreciate the values, resources, natural beauty, character and uniqueness of the Hagerman area.

Getting things done in small rural community requires champions who have the capacity and who are willing to provide the incentive and workforce, if necessary, to insure that projects are shepherded from inception to fruition. Hagerman IDEA, Inc. was established to meet this need. It provides a vehicle through which its members can identify and engage or partner with others to accomplish community improvement projects.

What has Hagerman IDEA accomplished?

The first project IDEA took on was to facilitate a public parking project in the center of Hagerman. Since then the organization has: assisted the Thousand Springs Park Manager accomplish unfunded but needed maintenance work at our local state park; aided in development of an environmental education project with the Hagerman elementary school; participated in the development of a master plan for the new Thousand springs State Park; coordinated efforts to improve directional and visitor information signs along the Thousand Springs Scenic Byway; facilitated town hall and other public meetings; produced seven annual Blues in the Park music festivals; facilitated development of a Memorandum of Understanding with 15 area organizations, agencies and levels of government whereby all participants pledged to seek efficiencies in their operations that might be produced by cooperating with each other; serves as City of Hagerman's Gem Community Committee; installed city entrance signing; organized city park clean-up projects; supported annual Arbor Day celebrations and tree purchases; facilitated efforts to establish the Snake River viticulture appellation; participated in Scenic Byway planning efforts and projects; provided a \$1000 scholarship for a local student to attend the College of Southern Idaho; provided a \$500 scholarship for a community leader to attend the Northwest Community Institute; cooperated with the National Fish Hatchery and the National Monument to provide financial aid to schools to fund bus trips to these local educational attractions; acted as the Board of Trustees for the Hagerman Television Translator District, accomplish relicensing requirements and facilitated establishment of a new permanent board to keep the district viable; acts as the Board of Directors of the Fossil Council while making efforts to establish a new board to keep this local organization viable. The most significant accomplishment to date has been our support for the establishment of the Idaho's Bounty food marketing & distribution cooperative. This co-op develops markets for area food producers by marketing and distributing their products.

What other projects has IDEA identified that the community needs?

In general IDEA continues to support work that improves the quality of life of local residents, promotes wise development of the community, educates our people and builds appreciation for resources and values of the area. Future projects that IDEA would like to facilitate are: making City Park playground safety improvements; creating a local shared visitor center, museum and library; developing an area trail system; building a launch area and canoe trail on Billingsley Creek; continued improvement of visitor information and services along the Thousand Springs Scenic Byway; and, of course, implementing a downtown revitalization project.

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A few years after completion of Hagerman's Comprehensive Plan, the GEM Plan and the Unfunded Mandates Study, all of which came into being around 1995, the Gem ProACTIONS Committee extracted, grouped, consolidated and prioritized the following action items to help them focus their efforts and make annual revisions to subsequent, annual Community Action Plans. All items are important to the community and work in any category could just as easily become a higher priority simply because planning has been completed and funding has become available. In any event, the list provides focus for the committee and other interested parties for what we the community would like to accomplish. Since creation of the list, progress has been made in a number of areas but much is yet to be done.

Proposed "ProACTIONS" Committee Focus List

01. Planning Capacity: Develop City's capacity to plan and seize opportunities to efficiently meet demands placed on leaders and facilities. Search out funding resources. Develop long-range capital improvement plan(s) that will identify what is required to meet current and future city and business needs.
02. Water, Sewer and Air: Protect the quality and quantity of the City's water supply (wellhead protection, drainage). Address wastewater needs such as expansion, dechlorination and nutrient management. Encourage all new developments to connect to city water and sewer services (at the developer's Costs). Develop new water resources as community grows. Comply with environmental mandates for water and sewer (e.g., arsenic, sulfates and radon). Develop a checklist to facilitate assessment of impacts on natural resource preservation. Preserve air quality by supporting the open burning ban.
03. School/City Cooperation: Encourage quality education and school facilities and maintain/improve communications, cooperation and productive relationship among community leaders and School. Foster sharing of city, private and school district facilities (e.g., recreation areas, coordinated library).
04. Setting: Facilitate beautification of streets, sidewalks, parking lots, public lands and state highways. Develop pleasing City approaches (landmarks for a sense of arrival and visitor orientation). Encourage continued cleanup of private property and enforce weed control ordinances. Encourage businesses and government to install and maintain landscaping. Facilitate maintenance of the older houses and yards (e.g., Paint the Town, weatherization assistance, social groups, churches, services clubs, etc.). Preserve open space. Enhance downtown and study possibility of developing an historic theme for the downtown area (e.g., Oregon Trail, 'Behind the times', "Old Stuff" etc.).
05. Parking: Develop a downtown parking plan for local and visitor parking (RVs, large trucks and passenger cars) and provide for visitor orientation (compatible with the Scenic Byway and HFBNM). Encourage off-street RV and extra vehicle parking to leave streets free for travel purposes in the residential zone. Encourage off- street parking to leave streets free for travelways in the commercial zone.
06. History: Preserve historic sites and areas. Keep an historic record of each site for future generations and preserve special sites and areas for education, history and a sense of community. Encourage private owners of special sites to preserve them. Research each sites qualifications for inclusion in the National Historic Register.
08. Local Economy and Business Climate: Position Hagerman as a good place to do business. Develop a plan to retain existing businesses, expand commerce, encourage homegrown businesses and recruit clean and quite, footloose and light industry. Encourage agricultural diversification including agriculture-related industries and businesses. Expand local employment opportunities for our High School graduates.
09. Services and Facilities: Provide adequate public facilities that meet demand and current health and safety standards. Expand or construct a combined City Hall/Library facility. Provide full-time library services to the residents of Hagerman.
10. Streets and Transportation: Adopt street construction and maintenance standards. Develop an annual maintenance schedule for Hagerman's streets. Coordinate transportation system planning, maintenance and construction with IDT and HHD. Guide location of future streets and discourage building that interferes with orderly development.
11. Housing: Attract retired residents and other new residents with new ideas. Study the need and encourage construction of housing for seniors in the community.
12. Recreation and Tourism: Coordinate with other agencies in the Magic Valley to encourage regional and local tourism. Develop travel related facilities such as parking to better serve increased numbers of tourists. Participate in the scenic byway project, including seeking funding opportunities. Encourage downtown cultural activities and events. Work with NPS to expand and improve educational and recreational opportunities. Mesh recreational and tourism development with local quality of life criteria and develop passive recreation (e.g., bikeways, walkways, natural areas) in town. Improve park - update park playground equipment and improve sprinkler system. Identify and develop youth recreational opportunities and develop youth programs.