

From: Greg Hahn <greg@surelsplace.org>

Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 9:35 AM

To: Bill Jacobs <bjacobs@GARDENCITYIDAHO.ORG>; Russ Heller <rheller@GARDENCITYIDAHO.ORG>; Teresa Jorgensen <tjorgensen@GARDENCITYIDAHO.ORG>; James Page <jpage@GARDENCITYIDAHO.ORG>; John Evans <jevans@GARDENCITYIDAHO.ORG>; Susanna Smith <ssmith@GARDENCITYIDAHO.ORG>; Jodi Eichelberger <jodi@surelsplace.org>

Subject: Re: A letter from the Surel's Place Board regarding discussions about the Surel Mitchel L-W-C District

Mayor Evans and Council Members Page, Jorgensen, Heller and Jacobs,

I wanted to thank you for your comments and assurances in last night's meeting, and for giving Jodi the chance to address the group.

It was heartening to hear that you share our impression that the District brings great value to the city and its future.

I believe that Council President Page got right to the heart of the matter when he asked about the intent of the concept — whether it was created to honor Surel's legacy or to shape the area's development.

The District was created when Surel was involved in planning and zoning herself, designed to encourage the kind of development that would allow for creative individuals and entrepreneurs to affordably navigate regulations and requirements. Only later, when she passed away, was it renamed in her honor.

I believe that as it stands now, it can and should continue to do both — recognize the impact and legacy that Surel left in Garden City, and more importantly, provide the tools and incentives developers and landowners will need to maintain and develop the District's innovative, artistic and unique ethos. It truly is like no other part of the Treasure Valley, adjacent to some of the densest parts of Boise's Downtown; landlocked by the river, the Bench (and, frankly, Chinden Boulevard, which at times can feel as impassable as the water and the cliff!); and infused with its own particular history and culture.

I know some of the details are being forced by the court decision, but in light of the rapid changes throughout our Valley and the fact that you are beginning to look at the entire zoning and planning picture, I hope you see this as an exciting chance to build out the toolkit that will enable this unique and valuable corner of Garden City to thrive.

Thank you again - for this and for all your leadership in the city.

- Greg

On Thu, Apr 21, 2022 at 5:23 PM Greg Hahn <greg@surelsplace.org> wrote:
Hello Mayor Evans and Council Members Page, Jorgensen, Heller and Jacobs,

I hope this finds you well.

Our board at Surel's Place convened via email this week and asked me to share these thoughts with you regarding Monday's discussion. I plan to attend and am happy to answer any questions that arise.

Please find attached a letter for the record, and for your convenience, here it is just pasted into this email:

Dear Mayor Evans and Honorable Council Members,

We understand that Garden City has identified several issues city leaders would like to rectify with the ordinance that created the Surel Mitchell Live-Work-Create District, and city staff are presenting you with two options: 1) Amend the ordinance to address the issues at hand or 2) Eliminate the district entirely. We at Surel's Place believe that it would be a devastating decision to our organization and to the neighborhood we serve and represent to eliminate the district entirely.

The Surel Mitchell Live-Work-Create District creates a community "brand" that helps define and direct what our uniquely urban, Downtown Boise-adjacent section of Garden City is becoming. It lays the groundwork for the kind of placemaking through local collaboration and large federal grants that efforts like our Garden City Placemaking Fund are directed toward.

But much more than that, the District directly addresses needs for affordable creative and entrepreneurial spaces — living and working — that have become critically important to the entire metropolitan area's future as commercial and residential real estate price increases have placed our region among the most expensive in the nation. The City Council was nothing short of prescient when it opened this then-underdeveloped section of Garden City as a crucible of innovative, creative and entrepreneurial approaches to land use and development.

There certainly are valid points of discussion on how local officials can best set up this section of Garden City to thrive and develop responsibly and successfully, and we hope that this process creates a deep conversation around parking, bike and pedestrian safety, density, affordability (for artists, residents and businesses), and more. We certainly agree, as the memo outlining the issues to the Council and Mayor states, that governing bodies should establish "clear and objective standards" for districts "so that everyone will know what they are."

Our staff and board would like to ask the Council, Mayor and staff to do all you can to embrace the District and improve it, to seize on the prescience of their predecessors in City Hall and ensure that the Surel Mitchell Live-Work-Create District remains a forward-looking, vibrant, innovative and empowering place that plays an essential role in the long term development not just of Garden City but the Treasure Valley as whole.

Sincerely,
Executive Director Greg Hahn and the Board of Directors

Thank you for taking a look!

- Greg

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Greg Hahn
Executive Director
he/him/his

[Surel's Place](#)

A nonprofit artist residency in the heart of the Surel Mitchell Live-Work-Create District in Garden City, Idaho.

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