

Coeur d'Alene Downtown Reconnaissance Survey Results Public Meeting
City Hall – Ron Edinger Conference Room
April 30, 2026, 12:00 -1:00 p.m.

PRESENTERS:

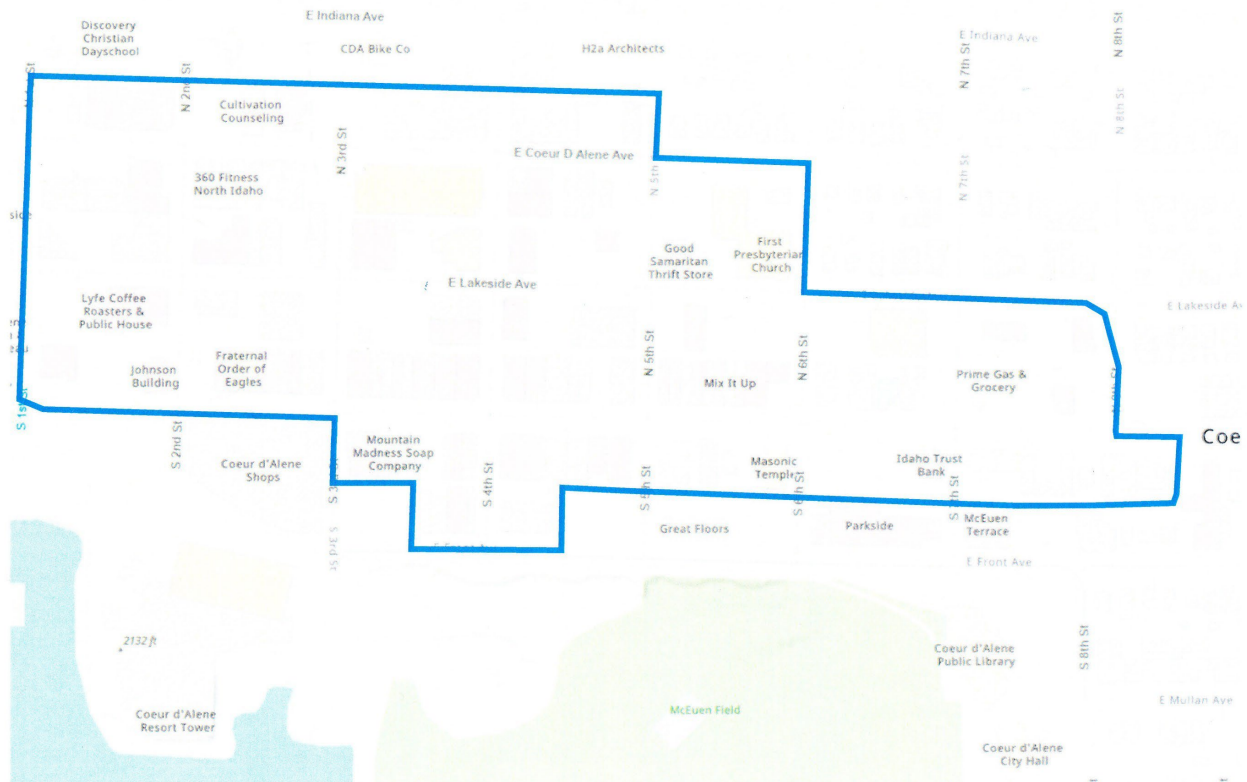
Diana Painter, Painter Preservation, consultant (*On Teams*)
Hilary Patterson, City of Coeur d'Alene Community Planning Director
Jason Tippeconnic Fox, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office Architectural Historian (*On Teams*)
Alexis Matrone, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office CLG Coordinator/Preservation Planner (*On Teams*)

Downtown Reconnaissance Survey

Ms. Patterson introduced herself and stated she is the Community Planning Director for the City of Coeur d'Alene. She welcomed the public, members of the City's Historic Preservation Commission, and introduced Diana Painter, the consultant and SHPO representatives. She provided a brief history on Coeur d'Alene's Historic Preservation Commission. She explained the purpose of a reconnaissance survey and shared that the budget for this survey was \$16,000 with \$11,000 from the Certified Local Government grant funds and \$5,000 in a match from the City. She then handed it over to the SHPO representatives.

Ms. Matrone and Mr. Tippeconnic Fox from the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) explained that they reviewed the information that Ms. Painter has put in the ICRIS database base from the survey area. They said Ms. Painter has done excellent work and they will be using her work as a new model for survey work moving forward. They said they are very excited about this project and how it's going to serve the City of Coeur d'Alene well as the commission seeks to understand a part of the community that has been changing and understand the historic resources that are there and what the different options might be.

Survey Area:



Ms. Painter stated the survey work is really the first step in any kind of historic preservation process. You can see its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that the preservation plan pointed out. And really the heart of it in terms of what we've just been working on is the fact that there's a lot of pressure on development downtown. That's one reason to get good documentation of your historic resources. That really helped drive this process. The Sherman Avenue Corridor Plan provided some guidance. The existing plans have pointed out the work that the commission has been doing and informed them of what other communities have been doing to develop downtown design guidelines and standards. She noted other documents and resources that she reviewed as part of the survey, such as the inventory of the central business district that was done in 1979. The inventory provided information on each building, how tall they were, how many stories, and what businesses were in each of those locations. There are existing buildings that are listed in the National Register, which are the Old City Hall, the Federal Building, and the Masonic Temple. The survey from 1988 was well done. There was a lot of documentation. The reason it was particularly valuable for this process is it shows how much has been done to downtown to reinstate some of the historic features of the existing buildings. She talked about the statement of significance. A reconnaissance survey records the physical appearance of a building. The history regarding this is, some cities and states do that, and some don't. But technically speaking, the most important thing about this kind of survey is defining the features and recording the appearance. Integrity is a function. It's the location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. To retain integrity, a building must retain most of those aspects, but not necessarily all of them. It will need at least four or more out of seven. The construction history, sometimes referring to historical maps, or sometimes you can spot changes just from experience in working with buildings in general, and identify the material styles, architects, and builders. We input this information into the forms. We need to use at least two photos and sometimes use a historic photo and upload them into the database.

Ms. Matrone stated the public will have the opportunity to see all this information once the information has been uploaded into ICRIS.

Ms. Painter continued her presentation and stated the historic overview is the eras of growth in Coeur d'Alene. The greatest number of buildings surveyed are in the period from 1900 to 1928, with 48 resources in the preservation plan and as part of this study. Then it tapered down, so to speak, during the depression and World War II, the number of resources declined, which is not uncommon, especially during the Depression. The post-war boom and city expansion with 21 resources. It depends on the place, how much post-war boom influenced the downtown core, because oftentimes this is a period where expansion takes place kind of outside the historic core, and that is what happened in Coeur d'Alene for the most part. In 1980 to the present, we survey the resources but we're not addressing that period in terms of preservation development because it's a modern timeframe. Usually, we incorporate into a historic district building that is 50 years or older as a norm. The historic preservation plan was done in 2021. They start with the 1890 with the Presbyterian Church in its first phase. So that's the oldest resource. In 1921, that is a heavy period of growth. And then it declined slightly between 1910 and 1920. And I have to say, I don't know enough about the specific history of Coeur d'Alene to know why that little bump or decline happened. But then it bumped right up again in 1930 and continues to grow, as you know. In 1921 the Sandborn maps show a before and after and it illustrates little houses and commercial area where commercial buildings occupied the core but surrounding that core was a pretty healthy neighborhood of single-family residences. The Presbyterian Church is on the map and four blocks facing along Sherman. The Sandborn maps show that the transition had been made from mostly frame buildings, wood frame buildings, to the brick that you see here now. That had made a complete transition transformation into a brick downtown and a compact downtown. The next steps that you can take are going forward regarding a historic district with boundaries that meet the NPS (National Park Service) standards. If you decide to pursue a historic district, there will be a lot of community outreach. Make sure that the design guidelines address the Secretary of the Interior standards, which are the federal government's standards that they put out. There are several types that help guide historic development. And many cities take the Secretary of the Interior standards and tailor them to their city through their design guidelines, and that's the way that they implement those standards. The Historic Preservation Act was passed in 1966. There's some history of those standards being refined and implemented over a pretty robust period of time. Usually, cities implement standards for rehabilitation. The city can also make sure that the infill standards address the historic district. And standards #9 and #10, are standards in particular that address new construction.

Ms. Patterson stated this is helpful for the city and Historical Preservation Commissioners to inform them what the existing resources are in the downtown. This will help with our effort that we have for our working group. The city staff is working with an ad hoc committee and looking at the Downtown Core for development regulations and design guidelines. This is also helpful for looking at what exists currently. As you mentioned, looking at Secretary of the Interior standards. She referenced Kalispell, MT and Boise, ID as example communities with historic districts and design guidelines. She said, "What does that look like with our design guidelines for new construction? At this point, it's really just informational for us. We don't have any plans to form a Historic District but that could come up as a recommendation. For the commission, this is kind of the first step in this process that we have talked about. If we did a Historic District, maybe it would be local, and then you kind of create your own format, and you don't have to go through the long process of going through the National Register of Historic Places. But it does sound like there are some benefits if we did it through the National Register of Historic places related to historic tax credit. That is something that SHPO may want to weigh in on."

Ms. Matrone explained that the point of a reconnaissance survey is to document that entire survey area. One of the things that Ms. Painter said that could come out of this is a recommended or proposed district boundary. Ms. Painter documented all the properties within the larger area of the map and then made this recommendation for a possible historic district. She mentioned the terms "contributing" and "not contributing." These evaluations are done by looking at the Secretary of the Interior Standards that are set by the National Park Service, and it's just looking at those changes made over time, such as the materials. There's a lot of characteristics that go into these determinations, and they can be kind of fluid. Some of them are obvious. Some of them are a bit more difficult to really get into their determinations. We must get into the nitty-gritty of the changes to make those determinations. They might be from the 80s, 90s, or even more recent. Some of the buildings could have just undergone too many changes where they no longer have that same integrity or follow those same historic characteristics where they are now considered "not contributing." They can one day become "contributing" again. That's why in this

documentation, in ICRIS, you could see the changes that we describe over time and if we can we always say you if this change is made it would then be “contributing.” We try to be as detailed as possible but that information can come with ongoing research into all this so we just wanted everyone to better understand what that “contributing” and “not contributing” status really means in all this. The next step and usually what we recommend is moving towards a National Register-listed district, subject to the desires of the city, the commission, and the public of Coeur d’Alene. A National Register-listed district puts no restrictions and no protections on any of these properties. It is simply an honorific designation. It says, great job, you have a historic property. What we see is it boosts that community support for that historic area. It does open all of these commercial businesses that are still contributing, all those contributing could possibly be able to utilize the historic tax credits.

Ms. Painter said she wanted to point out that to be “contributing” or historic, as the layperson might say, the building doesn’t always have to reflect the fact that it was built in 1900. It doesn’t have to go back that far, but changes need to be over 50 years old for the building to be considered contributing. It’s not hard and fast. It doesn’t have to look totally original. You could have a storefront that we’ve redone in the 1950s, and it’s a great example of a 1950s storefront. It’s intact for the period it was redeveloped in. That can also be “contributing.” The rules aren’t quite as hard and fast as this might imply.

John Swallow commented he has three of the buildings in the survey. One of them is “contributing” and two are “not contributing.” He asked if he could see those reports to see why they are not contributing because he thinks he would argue that they’re very much contributing to the historic nature of downtown.

Ms. Matrone stated, let’s preface this by saying there are many properties that the SHPO staff sat down as a team to review these, look at, and would love to say, this is contributing to a district. Unfortunately, we must follow those National Park Service guidelines on making these designations. The Park Service standards can be very strict on these things. Even if we can’t fit it into a “contributing” because of the Park Service standards, it doesn’t take away from the historic significance of Coeur d’Alene and its importance. There might just be some changes, some materials, whatever it may be, that could make a building “contributing” again. I don’t know what properties we’re talking about that just didn’t check certain boxes, so we weren’t able to say yes or no. Putting it on a list can seem like we’re taking away from the overall historic significance, and that’s not what we’re trying to do in any way. We just have to follow those Park Service standards and guidelines, and sometimes it just doesn’t fit with something that has happened over time. Please give Ms. Patterson the address and we could do this offline. We could pull up those determinations and then send them back to Ms. Patterson, and she could give you that update. Feel free to share our contact information. We don’t mind having a phone call or looking into this more. We could look at it again and just double check.

Ms. Painter commented that the survey just takes a brief look at the buildings. If you have information on your building and if you have all the renovations on your buildings you should contact the city and SHPO about it.

Mr. Tippeconnic Fox stated he would second what Ms. Painter said in her last response. If a particular property owner wants to know how their property could become contributing, we can always look at that building and look at work that could be done to enhance its historic character. These determinations are a living sort of process and things change. We try to be as fair and consistent as possible in evaluating every single resource downtown. The same standard is applied to everybody. But again, we’re always happy to revisit these determinations should a need arise. On another point, I would also add in terms of thinking about potential next steps for the community, this survey project has evaluated the buildings in two different ways. The first is whether they are individually eligible for listing in the National Register or whether they are contributing to a district such as this downtown district or both. When something is determined individually eligible and we do have a number of resources downtown that were determined to have that status, that simply means they have a higher level of architectural or historic significance that we knew about, at least at the time of this survey. This is sort of just a very quick snapshot of downtown and additional information could mean that other properties fall into that individual listing category. It’s just something to keep in mind because if perhaps there’s not a desire immediately to move forward with a larger historic district, maybe you just focus on individually listing some properties. You could do that either at the National Register level or the local level. That’s really one of the things that we were just really pleased with seeing from the data that Ms. Painter has assembled. Coeur d’Alene has almost all

the options available in terms of which way you could proceed next. We could go with this kind of larger historic district. There could be a smaller historic district of some size, or again, there could be some individual buildings that are designated in some way. You just have a lot of options on your menu, and that's a great place to be as a community. There's just a lot of ways to move forward. In terms of the tax credits, the National Register listing of downtown as a district would open up the property owners within that area that are to a financial incentive that's run through the National Park Service to kind of offset some of the costs of doing work on their buildings in a way that would enhance and preserve their historic character. When you designate a big downtown area, it just sort of saves the property owners a step in that process and kind of opens them up to that financial incentive. If you have property owners that are thinking about remodeling their storefront, there's a way you could use the tax credits to do that. You know, if you have a two-story building where maybe the first floor is a store and the second floor is not being used at this time, that's a way to get some incentive to kind of bring that second floor back into use, some sort of income-producing purpose. That's just another option on the menu, but kind of one of the things to consider in terms of whether you go with a National Register designation or not.

Ms. Patterson stated I think the other interesting thing is if we did pursue either the local or the national district, kind of like our recent historic district – the Garden District – there are a number of properties in the Garden District that also are noncontributing. But once you're in the boundary, you are a historic property, and then you are eligible for the benefits of that.

Ms. Matrone stated you could go in two very different directions, and those are going to look at two very different ways. The national register district is just to open the area up to those other incentives like the tax credits. But on the local level, if you do a local historic district of some kind, that is going to be viewed under a completely different lens than it doesn't have to follow those national park criteria. I think that's a good thing to really drive home too that those are going to be two very different things and the planning on both beneficial both hold great benefit just it's two very different things

Commissioner Smith asked if there is something keeping us from doing both?

Ms. Patterson replied I don't think so because Boise has both their Historic Districts designated as local historic districts and National Register districts.

Ms. Matrone stated yes, a lot of times the National Register District comes first, and then the city will use those boundaries to just create that Overlay District for the local side of things. It doesn't have to go that way. That's just the most common way that we see it. Even if you have, let's say we use this exact boundary for a national register district, when you start to do the local district, you don't even have to use those boundaries, even if that's already established. That could look completely different as well. There are many, many different options. You are in a really great spot because you have so many options right now.

Ms. Patterson asked if we formed a local district first and then wanted to do a national register district, that wouldn't restrict us from doing that either. Is that correct?

Ms. Matrone replied no, absolutely not. On that end, though, I will say that I think of surveys like new cars that you drive off the lot. As soon as you drive away, that car is not worth as much as it previously was just because changes happen so quickly that right now, we have the most updated information to move forward with the National Register district nomination. If we do wait a year to two years, that information will kind of need to be updated. You don't have to do the whole survey again, but you will have to invest some time and resources into updating the changes that happen within that area. That's just another thing to know long-term planning-wise.

Mr. Tippeconnic Fox stated the Garden District was a much larger district when we did the National Register. This is fifth of the size. It's just kind of an easier project to contemplate as you're making decisions about which way you want to go.

A member of the public asked are these national guidelines easily accessible to see if we make changes to our buildings, are we going to get another survey before it becomes a district? And now we're outside of contributing because we made edits to our building. Are these guidelines easily accessible and easy to see when we go to make changes to our properties?

Ms. Patterson stated that's a great question. What kind of guidance could we provide for property owners

on what are the kinds of criteria for keeping a building so that it is contributing?

Ms. Matrone stated the Park Service does have guidelines that are accessible to everybody, and she admits they're not the easiest things to read. SHPO can send examples of other areas within Idaho that have local districts with those design guidelines already that kind of give, even if it's not specific to your community, the type of building, that one commercial block in this time period with this material. We could provide those, too, for now, before the city gets to that stage of things that may help with those decisions. I also want to say that we always want to be accessible to the public. Anytime you are planning on making changes, please feel free to give us a and we could go over those changes and just give recommendations or best practices, you know, before you proceed. Because we do know the area, we do know what the plans will be for the future or the different ideas. We're always here to help in that end, and then we could provide some material that should be helpful in the meantime.

Chairman Burns stated for any building owner who's looking at this information, however we decide to proceed, we're always available. Our local Coeur d'Alene Historic Preservation Commission is also always ready to sit down and talk to you and look at what you're talking about and help guide you through any of that and maybe simplify some of the standards that the national standards can kind of be given a little too sometimes. We are here as a resource for you always.

Commissioner Sardell stated what I can recommend is that everybody does have access to the ICRIS database. Once these items are in the database, there'll be some information about your property. You can search it by address. That should have the efforts from Ms. Painter and then the State Historic Preservation Office kind of analyzing should have character-defining features that are important, and that might be important for you to protect, preserve, and work with if you are doing some work on the building. Those things being the most important character-defining features that we evaluate those buildings now or in the future. If those are lost, then they may lose their historic integrity. If you're able to maintain or preserve those items, you will be able to be considered historic if the survey was done in another 20 years, for example. That would be a really quick and easy way that's been set up.

Chairman Burns stated again to emphasize there are no restrictions. Even if you're in a historic district, there are no restrictions as to what you can do with your building. Obviously, we would as a commission, love to steer you towards keeping it more historic than less, but there is no restriction there in terms of what you can do. We're just happy to work with you.

Ms. Patterson commented it's important to point out, there's two different things. We already have design guidelines for Downtown; those are in place right now. Those would affect if someone is going to be doing alterations to their building, but they're not historic specific. If this becomes a local or National District, then we may evaluate design guidelines for those. This is something we're looking at currently. How do we kind of build it all in so it makes sense?

Chairman Burns stated we are just now, like you, getting the information from this survey, and we will be in our future meetings and future planning looking very closely at it, deciding what directions we want to pursue and those will be public. Anything we do in terms of a local or national historic register nomination will be public meetings. Our regular meetings are always publicly accessible too. We will be determining where we're going from here and it's got to be the process starting today.

There were no additional questions and the meeting concluded.

Submitted by Traci Clark, Administrative Assistant