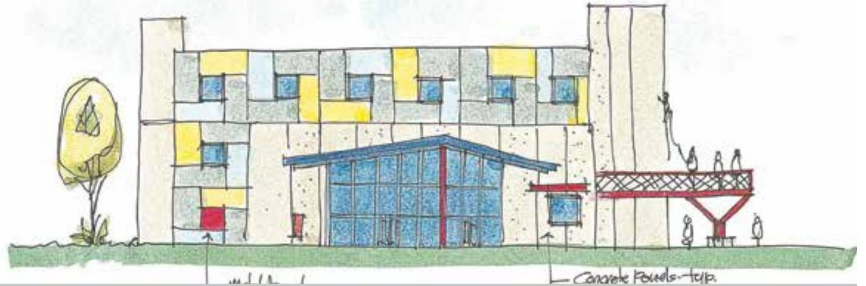




MERIDIAN PRESS

\$1.00

New climbing gym to open in Meridian, page 7



AN EDITION OF THE IDAHO PRESS-TRIBUNE // MYMERIDIANPRESS.COM // FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 2018

Meridian housing market 3rd most expensive and fastest-growing in Ada County

BY PATTY BOWEN

pbowen@idahopress.com

Josh and Megan Watson and their three kids recently moved to a “fixer-upper” in Meridian a couple blocks from Settler’s Park. The couple, like many other young parents, wanted somewhere to raise their family that had more space than their cramped apartment in Boise.

Megan went to high school in Eagle and moved to Boise years ago with Josh, who works there as a teacher. Megan said she’s watched Meridian and the Treasure Valley grow quickly since she graduated years ago.

“We’re grateful to be here, but sad to see all the growth that changes the culture,” she said. “New problems arise with a bigger community.”

For the past three years, Meridian has exceeded the number of new residential units approved in any other city in Ada or Canyon counties. In 2017, the number of residential units approved in Meridian more than doubled that of Boise — and almost doubled the total amount of residential units built in all of Canyon County.

The influx of new houses on the market is one factor bumping up Meridian’s average home price by more than 10 percent, as new construction costs more than existing homes.

New houses in Meridian

According to a report by the Boise Regional Realtors, Meridian was the third most expensive place to buy a house in Ada County from April 2017 to April 2018. Eagle was the most expensive, with the

median cost of a single-family residence in Meridian during the same time period was \$302,893 — a 12.9 percent increase from a year ago, according to the same report. The median cost of a house in Boise was \$282,812.

Boise Regional Realtors President Gary Salisbury said home prices in Meridian have seen such an increase because of the rising costs of materials, land acquisition and labor. The high demand for real estate, he said, also contributed to the increases in housing costs.

Meridian land value has increased 16 percent in the past year, Ada County Assessor Bob McQuade said. He agreed this was one of many culminating factors making it more expensive to buy a house in Meridian.

Megan Watson said her family closed on their house in Meridian in December.

“We wouldn’t have been able to afford it if we waited a couple months,” she said. “We got lucky.”

Megan is a stay-at-home mom. She said her husband’s salary as a teacher was not enough for them to afford rent at many nearby apartments.

According to Cassie Zimmerman, director of communications for the Boise Regional



Josh Watson goes to pick up his daughter Keeli Watson at Settler’s Park on May 21. Josh and his family moved to Meridian several months ago to find a house with more space.

new houses in Ada County is notably higher than existing houses.

In 2017, the median price of existing houses in Ada County was \$275,000, almost \$100,000 below the new house median price of \$371,476, she said. This price difference is one reason the median sale cost of a homes in Boise was lower than Meridian — the Meridian’s real estate market is made up of mostly new homes, according to Salisbury.

In 2017, there were 2,277 residential units built in Meridian, making up 30.8 percent of residential growth in the Treasure Valley area, according to

by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, or COMPASS.

In comparison, there were 1,076 units approved in Boise — making up 14.6 percent of residential growth — and 799 units approved in Nampa — making up 10.8 percent.

According to Carl Miller, demographer for COMPASS, Meridian has more developable land where single-family houses can be built.

Salisbury said there’s demand nationally for larger single-family

houses.

He said during parts of the recession there was a tendency to build smaller homes, and this might be a driving factor in why some people are picking new homes in Meridian over older homes in other areas of the Treasure Valley.

“Availability of inventory is the driving factor (for people choosing Meridian) ... and a location that best fits their lifestyle,” Salisbury said.

More HOUSING | A6

Housing/ from A1

Older, smaller houses are still popular too, he said, and often purchased by young couples as their first home.

Megan and her husband chose Meridian because they found an old home they could fix up. She said her family would not have been able to afford a new one.

GROWTH IN NORTHWEST AND SOUTH MERIDIAN

Northwest and south Meridian are hot spots for housing development. A map developed by COMPASS shows that most of Meridian's building permits issued for single-family residential construction fell in these two areas in 2017.

Salisbury said these areas are the most expensive to buy homes in because there is so much new construction.

According to a report by the Intermountain Multiple Listing Service, for the first quarter of 2018, the median cost of a new house in southeast Meridian was \$412,450 and an existing house was \$330,000, making it arguably the most expensive area to buy a house in Meridian.

A number of new commercial projects are being built or have recently been built in south Meridian, including The Hill, a 22-acre campus that includes the South Meridian YMCA and Hillsdale Park. Later this year, the Meridian Library District plans to open a small library focused on early childhood development, and St. Luke's plans to open a clinic offering family medicine, pediatrics, physical therapy and behavioral health. Both will be located at The Hill.

The Meridian City Council also recently ap-

proved a new fire station south of Interstate 84. The recently named Discovery Park — a 77-acre park planned to open in late summer 2019 — is also in south Meridian, on the south side of Lake Hazel Road between Locust Grove and Eagle roads.

An Ada County Highway District presentation earlier this year said 4,400 residential building lots have been approved in south Meridian and north Kuna since 2014.

The 4,400 figure represents lots included in preliminary subdivision plats and does not include older approved lots that have not been built out yet, said Gary Inselman, ACHD development services manager. Most — about 3,400 — are in the Kuna area and the rest in Meridian.

That growth is projected to generate over 40,000 vehicle trips per day and will lead to 13 intersections and six road segments in the area being over capacity, he said.

Future development is expected to bring another 10,000 vehicle trips on top of that. Ten Mile Road in particular will be impacted by the growth, he said.

FASTEST GROWING

The majority of homes in Meridian during the first quarter of this year were sold in northeast Meridian and northwest Meridian — 425 out of 577 sold, according to the Intermountain MLS.

Meanwhile, the majority of permits for multifamily apartments were filed for areas along Overland Road in 2017. In 2017 the largest number of multifamily residential units were built in Meridian over the last 15 years — which was 798 units, according to the Intermountain MLS.

According to Miller with COMPASS there is a need for multifamily



Roofing materials rest on the ceiling of a house under construction located on Morning Sky Avenue in Meridian on May 2, 2018

CHRIS BRONSON/IP

MERIDIAN LABOR MARKET STATISTICS

The boom in the housing market has arguably made a dent in the labor market in Meridian.

According to a report by Janell Hyer, research analyst supervisor for the Idaho Department of Labor, there has been a 17.9 percent increase in the number of jobs in the real estate, rental and leasing market in Meridian from 2016 to 2017.

From 2013 to 2016 there was a 61.5 percent increase in the same field, according to the same report.

housing in Meridian as the number of families in the area grows larger. Miller said the increase in multifamily permits is indicative of the demand for housing new urban amenities and highways.

According to McQuade, the assessor, the majority of new people moving to Meridian are young couples from Boise looking to start families or retirement age individuals from Idaho's surrounding states.

McQuade said a lot of the retirees migrating to Meridian are paying cash for their homes. Salisbury

agreed that these are the primary demographics making up growth in Meridian, though he said the growth is coming from many sectors.

The housing growth in Meridian presents challenges for city and highway district officials.

"There's going to be challenges on existing services to make sure that transportation amenities are in place — sidewalks, paths, bikeways, public transportation, wide enough roads," Miller said. "Meridian is going into updating its comprehen-



PATTY BOWEN/IP

Megan Watson holds her 4 week old Lili Watson while watching a kite with her son Kai Watson in Settler's Park on May 2. Megan and her family moved to Meridian several months ago to find a home with more space.

sive plan. ... Stakeholders are working together to solve these problems."

At the May 22 City Council meeting, council members voted to approve an agreement with Logan Simpson Design, Inc. not to exceed \$212,554 to help design the Meridian's new Comprehensive Plan.

Megan said she already sees the pressure growth has put on roads and schools.

"It makes me sad," she said. "In every corner there is a huge apartment complex (being built)."

Patty Bowen is the Meridian Press reporter. You can reach her at pbowen@idahopress.com.

