

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

6015 Glenwood Street □ Garden City, Idaho 83714
Phone 208/472-2921 □ Fax 208/472-2996 □
www.gardencityidaho.gov/office

To: Planning and Zoning Commission
From: Jenah Thornborrow, Development Services Director
Subject: Review of South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal District Area Plan
Date: For October 15, 2025, Meeting

REQUEST

To evaluate the proposed South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal Plan submitted by Urban Renewal Agency for the City of Garden City, Idaho (GCURA) and provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding its conformity with the Garden City Comprehensive Plan, pursuant to Idaho Code § 50-2008(b).

UNDERSTANDING URBAN RENEWAL

In Idaho, Urban Renewal Agencies are granted broad authority to carry out redevelopment efforts aimed at eliminating deteriorated or deteriorating conditions and improving communities, provided these efforts are confined to designated geographic areas established through formally adopted urban renewal plans. These agencies can initiate and manage urban renewal projects with the goals of revitalizing the areas in which they operate and stimulating economic development. They may coordinate or directly provide funding for public infrastructure projects such as roadway and sidewalk improvements, utility improvements, improvements to or installation of parks, trails and other pedestrian/bicycle amenities, and other public facilities.

Urban renewal agencies may utilize a variety of funding sources, including but not limited to federal grants, developer advanced funding, bonds, and loans. However, the primary funding mechanism is "Revenue Allocation" financing (in Idaho), also known as Tax Increment Financing (TIF). This tool allows for the allocation of increased property tax revenue to the agency for a period of 20 years within the defined geographic area in a tax neutral manner. When redevelopment leads to growth and higher property values, the additional tax revenue generated, known as the increment, is set aside to fund improvements within the district. The tax revenue from the base value continues to be allocated to the other taxing districts, while the increment supports revitalization efforts. The revitalization efforts, in turn, increase the value of the property. While the resulting tax revenues ultimately benefit all taxing districts within an urban renewal area, the district's active period can, in certain instances, create short-term financial strain for some taxing agencies. This is because service demands may increase (although, in other instances they may also decrease) in the revenue allocation area. Other financial

constraints such as inflation and other increased costs of operation caused by factors other than redevelopment and revitalization may occur before those agencies receive their allocation of tax revenue realized by the new construction within the district boundaries.

Idaho Code § 50-2905 identifies what information the plan (for the defined geographic area) must include with specificity as follows:

1. A statement describing the total assessed valuation of the base assessment roll of the revenue allocation area and the total assessed valuation of all taxable property within the municipality.
2. A statement listing the kind, number, and location of all proposed public works or improvements within the revenue allocation area.
3. An economic feasibility study.
4. A detailed list of estimated project costs.
5. A fiscal impact statement showing the impact of the revenue allocation area, both until and after the bonds are repaid, upon all taxing districts levying taxes upon property on the revenue allocation area.
6. A description of the methods of financing all estimated project costs and the time when related costs or monetary obligations are to be incurred.
7. A termination date for the plan and the revenue allocation area as provided for in section 50-2903(21), Idaho Code. In determining the termination date, the plan shall recognize that the agency shall receive allocation of revenues in the calendar year following the last year of the revenue allocation provision described in the urban renewal plan.
8. A description of the disposition or retention of any assets of the agency upon the termination date. Provided however, nothing herein shall prevent the agency from retaining assets or revenues generated from such assets as long as the agency shall have resources other than revenue allocation funds to operate and manage such assets.

In Garden City, the GCURA Board of Commissioners is appointed by the Mayor with the consent of the City Council. The GCURA, was established in 1996 with the creation of the River Front District. This district, which has sunset, was generally located east of the Expo Idaho property to 42nd Street, just north of Osage Street to the Boise River and Greenbelt. A second, still active district, is the River Front East District, established in 2012. It covers the area from Veterans Parkway to the eastern city limits and from Osage Street to the Boise River, including 42nd Street from Adams Street to the river. This district is expected to sunset no later than 2033. The proposed South of Chinden (SOCHI) District would be the third urban renewal district established by GCURA.

Types of projects that the GCURA has completed in the first two districts include, but are not limited to roadway and sidewalk improvements, utility upgrades, park and greenbelt construction, and wayfinding/branding signage.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION'S ROLE

[Idaho Statute § 50-2008](#) outlines the process for preparing and approving an urban renewal plan, and it highlights the important role of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Idaho Statute § 50-2008(b). Before any urban renewal project can begin, the City Council must first pass a resolution declaring that the area in question is deteriorated or deteriorating and appropriate for redevelopment. Once this determination is made, an urban renewal plan may be prepared. Before the City Council can approve the plan, it must be sent to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review. The Commission is responsible for evaluating whether the proposed plan aligns with the city's comprehensive plan and must submit written recommendations to the Council within sixty days. If the Commission does not respond within that timeframe, the Council may proceed without its input.

After receiving the Commission's recommendations or the expiration of the review period, the City Council must hold a public hearing to present the plan and gather feedback. The Council may approve the plan if it finds that displaced families will be relocated to safe and affordable housing, the plan aligns with the city's overall development goals, adequate parks and recreational facilities are considered, and the plan encourages private investment in redevelopment. If the area includes open land, additional findings must be made to justify acquisition for either residential or nonresidential development, based on housing shortages or specific planning needs. Once the City Council approves a plan or its modification, it becomes effective, and the Urban Renewal Agency may begin implementation.

The table below includes the key dates for the adoption of the South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal District plan.

Timeline

April 14, 2025	GCURA approved Eligibility Report
June 9, 2025	Garden City approved Eligibility Report
October 3, 2025	GCURA formal transmittal of the plan to the City
October 15, 2025	Planning and Zoning Commission review
October 17, 2025	Formal transmittal of plan to taxing agencies and publication notice
October 24, 2025	First publication
November 7, 2025	Second publication
November 24, 2025	Public hearing and first reading
December 8, 2025	Consolidated second and third readings
After December 8, 2025	Publication of ordinance

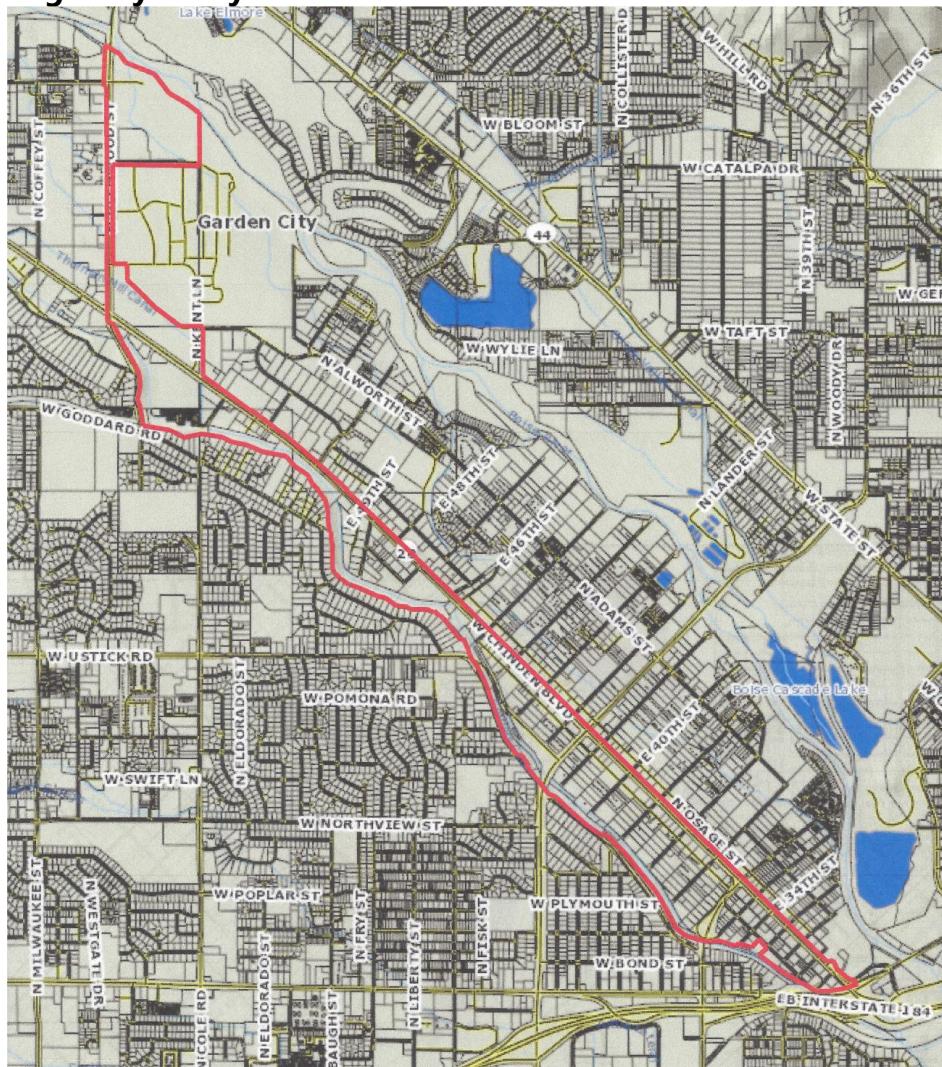
For the Planning and Zoning Commission, the key responsibility is to ensure that any proposed urban renewal plan supports the city's long-term planning objectives and contributes positively to the overall development strategy as outlined in the Garden City

Comprehensive Plan. The Planning and Zoning Commission's review helps guide the Council's decision-making and ensures that redevelopment efforts are well-integrated with existing land use policies.

SOUTH OF CHINDEN (SOCHI) URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT PLAN SPECIFICS

Kushlan I Associates was retained by the GCURA to study a 257-acre area spanning both city and unincorporated Ada County parcels and submitted an eligibility report. The South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal District eligibility report was accepted by the GCURA on April 14, 2025, and forwarded to the Ada County Board of Commissioners and the Garden City Council. The Ada County Board of Commissioners adopted the study by resolution. On June 9, 2025, the Garden City Council also adopted (Garden City) Resolution No. 1207-25, designating the area as a deteriorated and deteriorating area appropriate for urban renewal. The study area is outlined in the image below.

Eligibility Study Area

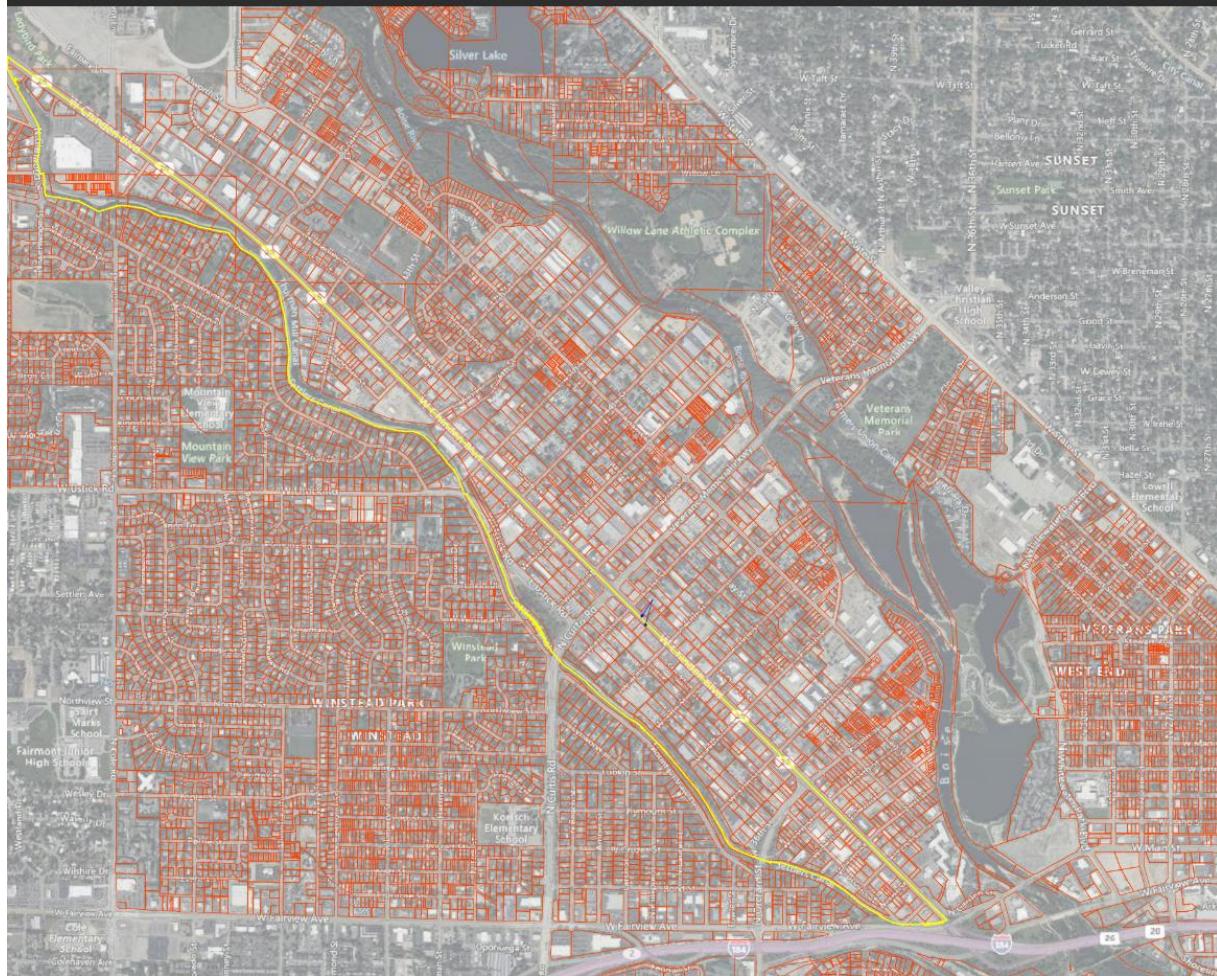


GCURA has submitted a comprehensive Urban Renewal Plan for this area, called South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal Plan, which includes revenue allocation financing

provisions and outlines strategies for infrastructure upgrades, economic revitalization, and environmental remediation.

While Ada County also found this area to meet the criteria, the county has opted to not participate in the district at this time. Subsequently, the county properties will not be included in the South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal Plan. The South of Chinden (SOCHI) revenue allocation area is shown below.

South of Chinden (SOCHI) District (area in yellow)



The plan notes that given its strategic location, the project area holds strong potential for substantial growth in higher-density housing, mixed use buildings, commercial, office, and retail sectors. However, without a mechanism to fund and build the necessary public infrastructure including water and sewer systems, roads, and pedestrian/bicycle amenities it would be difficult for potential redevelopment opportunities to materialize.

The plan suggests appropriate infrastructure to be initiated within the district as enhancements to streets and streetscapes, water and sewer systems, environmental cleanup and site preparation, stormwater control, public parking, plazas, pedestrian and bicycle pathways, and land acquisition to support the goals of the urban renewal plan.

Based on the proposed anticipated project costs, the emphasis of identified projects is Public Works projects. The plan also anticipates funding for some bicycle and pedestrian improvements, undergrounding of utilities, as well as park improvements. The plan does not anticipate residential displacement or open land.

Staff agrees that public works projects, particularly water line replacement projects, are acutely necessary for redevelopment to occur in the proposed district boundaries. This is not only because of the age of the infrastructure, but also the size of the waterlines. Without the size being increased, it is not possible for adequate waterflow, including adequate fire flow, to construct structures such as multi-family or non-residential buildings of a certain size or occupancy.

Undergrounding utilities enhances community resilience by reducing the frequency and severity of power outages caused by extreme weather events, high winds, falling debris, or vehicle collisions. In regions like Garden City, where seasonal storms and aging infrastructure pose risks to reliability, placing power lines underground can improve safety and long-term service continuity. Moreover, this approach also opens the door for planting street trees, which are essential for creating pedestrian-friendly environments.

Trees provide shade, reduce urban heat, and make sidewalks more inviting, encouraging walking and outdoor activity. In areas lacking bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as green space, residents often face barriers to mobility and recreation. These deficiencies contribute to the sense that the neighborhood is not fully livable or connected.

Adding bike lanes, sidewalks, and potentially trails would allow people to move safely and comfortably between homes, workplaces, and recreational areas, fostering a stronger sense of community. Moreover, research from the U.S. Forest Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that trees and green spaces improve air quality, reduce stress and anxiety, and support physical health. Urban greening and active transportation infrastructure are not just aesthetic upgrades, they are foundational to public health, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality.

ANALYSIS-CONFORMITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Planning and Zoning Commission is required to review the plan and submit written recommendations to the City Council within 60 days. However, GCURA has requested that the plan be heard by City Council in November, with an anticipated adoption date prior to December 31, 2025, to capture current construction tax increment. To meet these timelines, GCURA has requested that the recommendations be made in October.

Staff suggest that the South of Chinden (SOCHI) Urban Renewal Plan is supported by the following goals found in the adopted Garden City Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 1: Nurture the City and Goal 3: Create a Heart for the City both emphasize creating a livable, vibrant community where people can live, work, and recreate. These goals support the broader vision of revitalizing neighborhoods through infrastructure upgrades, green space, and improved connectivity.

Goal 4: Emphasize the “Garden” in Garden City encourages beautification and landscaping, including the planting of street trees and the enhancement of sidewalks and gateways. This goal supports the idea that undergrounding utilities enables tree planting, which contributes to pedestrian comfort, urban cooling, and aesthetic appeal.

Goal 7: Connect the City supports the addition of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. It calls for creating pedestrian and bicycle friendly connections, promoting public transportation, and improving standards for sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. These objectives directly reinforce the need for safe and accessible routes for residents to move between homes, jobs, and recreational areas.

Goal 6: Diversity in Housing calls for eliminating substandard housing and maintaining a fair share of affordable housing. Increasing water line capacity is essential for enabling multi-family and mixed-use development, which supports housing diversity and affordability.

Goal 9: Develop a Sustainable City promotes protecting natural resources and investing in infrastructure that supports long-term resilience. Upgrading aging water lines and undergrounding utilities aligns with this goal by improving service reliability and preparing the city for future growth and environmental challenges.

Together, these goals provide a strong policy foundation for the proposed redevelopment efforts and public works investments. They reflect a shared commitment to making Garden City more resilient, inclusive, and livable.

LINKS

- [South of Chinden \(SOCHI\) Urban Renewal Plan](#)
- [Eligibility Study and draft Resolutions \(Council Resolution No. 1207-25\)](#)
- [Draft Decision](#)