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## Nampa considers proposed design standards

Nampa issues permits for millions of dollars in commercial construction each month, but some investors have declined to build in the city while it has no standards to ensure pleasing design and landscaping in new construction, Nampa planning and zoning analyst Julianne Shaw said.

"They want some guarantee that a pole-barn structure doesn't go in next to their million-dollar investment," Shaw said.

City officials are considering proposed design standards to meet that need and protect investment along major roadways. The Nampa Planning and Zoning Commission will consider design review standards Tuesday for the Community Business District that primarily covers areas along Nampa's major roads, including Nampa-Caldwell and Garrity boulevards.

Under the proposed standards, new professional offices, commercial buildings and multi-family housing units of more than 5,000 square feet would be subject to a review by a mayor-appointed committee. And so would existing structures expanding by more than 25 percent. Smaller projects would be reviewed by city staff. Single-family homes would not be affected.

Nampa issued the Treasure Valley's largest commercial building permit in May at \$7.5 million for a 150,000-square-foot building that will house Kohl's and nine other businesses in the new Treasure Valley Marketplace. The city issued a total of \$10 million in permits for commercial construction in May, \$4 million in June and about \$5 million in July.

Residents have expressed concerns that big retailers are building basic structures that meet minimum standards without considering the surrounding neighborhood, Nampa spokeswoman Sharla Arledge said.

"Without incorporating materials, paint, lighting and landscaping to make it visually pleasing, the result has been buildings that look much like a warehouse surrounded by a big parking lot," Arledge said. "As the city grows, we want to make sure the growth reflects the pride we have in our community."

"Even some apartment complexes have frustrated residents when the buildings are less attractive and don't fit in with the pride and loving care homeowners have taken with their property down the street."

The proposed standards require "non-strip development design" with a minimum of three colors, textures or materials on the exterior, landscaping, and parking lots behind or beside the building.

"Views of large expanses of parking lots are strongly discouraged," the standards say. At least two developers agree Nampa needs design standards.

"It always enhances the area," said Laurel MacKinnon, a downtown developer with experience in several cities, "and it ensures a certain quality is being met. There's no argument to support not having them."

Tim Treinen, a partner in Treinen Construction, says standards are needed, but cities with design review need to speed up the approval process. It used to take a few days, but now it can take a month, even without design review, he said.

"We want the community to shine, but anything they can do to speed up the process would be helpful," Treinen said.