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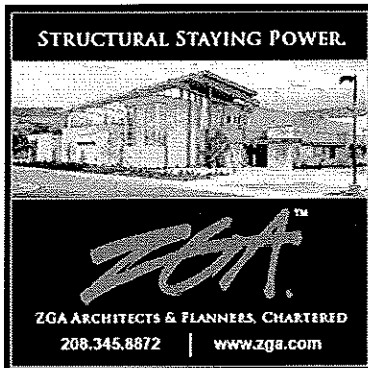
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This Week's Edition

'Law firm 2.0' brings together attorneys and planners

POSTED: Monday, April 21, 2008

by Simon Shifrin



What do you get when you put together a bunch of lawyers and land-use planners in the same firm?

A smart way to speed up building projects and developments, say the organizers of a new law firm in the Treasure Valley.

Three attorneys and a land use planner have joined a Treasure Valley branch of the Rose Law Group of Scottsdale, Ariz., which opened in January. The firm, whose Arizona operation claims to be the busiest land use and zoning firm in that state, bills itself as a "one-stop shop" for developers - from site acquisition to due diligence to entitlement. Joe Borton, a lawyer, started the Treasure Valley branch. He says putting everything under one roof lets developers avoid the miscommunication and delays that come with coordinating between a half-dozen different firms. "You'll wait to hear back from the planner, who calls you back in two weeks, and then you'll find out you have to contact the traffic engineer," says Borton, also a Meridian councilman. "I'm not relying on so many outside land planners, real estate transaction attorneys, (and staff that are) going to prepare a presentation. So we can get things done quicker." Borton calls it "law firm 2.0."

After a little more than three months, the firm is helping to guide 10,000 acres of development in the Treasure Valley - including five planned communities, the Bella Vista Recovery Center in the Boise foothills, an expansion of North Shore Charter School in Eagle, several gravel pits, and Polo Cove, a vineyard and luxury resort development near Caldwell. Shawn Nickel, the firm's land use planner, says for most of his career he would have to wait weeks for an attorney to call him back on legal expertise.

Now, he just pounds on the wall.

It ultimately saves developers both time and money. Borton says his firm has helped North Star Charter School advance from site acquisition to entitlement in about four months, something that would normally take twice as long and cost twice as much.

"If you're bouncing around to various firms, going elsewhere, you're not going to have that kind of success," Borton says.

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