



Ogden IRS Complex: Catalyzing Downtown's Rebirth

When a taxpayer calls the Internal Revenue Service to ask a question about their return, there's a good chance that the call lands in Ogden, Utah, where the IRS maintains one of its largest customer service centers. Formerly housed in two buildings on the city's outskirts, this important federal facility is now the multi-purpose centerpiece of an innovative revitalization strategy for downtown Ogden.

For many years, the IRS call center had been run as a split operation in two World War II vintage buildings on a large complex. By 1998, the IRS was looking to expand the service center and its 800-person workforce. GSA and the IRS began investigating how to consolidate IRS operations into one facility at the complex. Because further development on the property would have conflicted with an adjacent nature preserve, the IRS and GSA began to look elsewhere for a new site with more space. Their search led them to a tremendous opportunity for IRS and the community.

Upon hearing of the IRS's needs, the City of Ogden, with an energetic new mayor and economic development director, seized the initiative and offered to help find suitable space downtown. Although IRS employees had initial concerns about relocating to downtown, the IRS agreed that with the city's help a downtown site might meet their long-term facilities



Opening ceremonies: Scowcroft Building and Junction City Café.

**A Field Report from
GSA's Urban Development/
Good Neighbor Program**



The selected site was a brownfield, in poor shape when selected for the IRS project. It took the vision of IRS, GSA, and their local partners to pursue the site's potential.

needs as well as the concerns of their employees. Working with the IRS, Ogden officials and GSA project manager Tammy Eatough soon identified a brownfield site that could accommodate 135,000 square feet of new IRS offices. Owned by the City of Ogden Redevelopment Agency (CORA), the new property was located in a developing part of downtown, across the street from a planned bus/rail transit center, within two blocks of an historic district, and adjacent to the city's new minor-league baseball stadium.

Through the city's planned transfer of the site to a successful offeror, a private developer could build the new IRS facility on the site for lease to the government. The site included the Boyle Warehouse, a largely vacant potentially historic building consisting of 30,000 rentable square feet, which the team felt might be reused in the new facility.

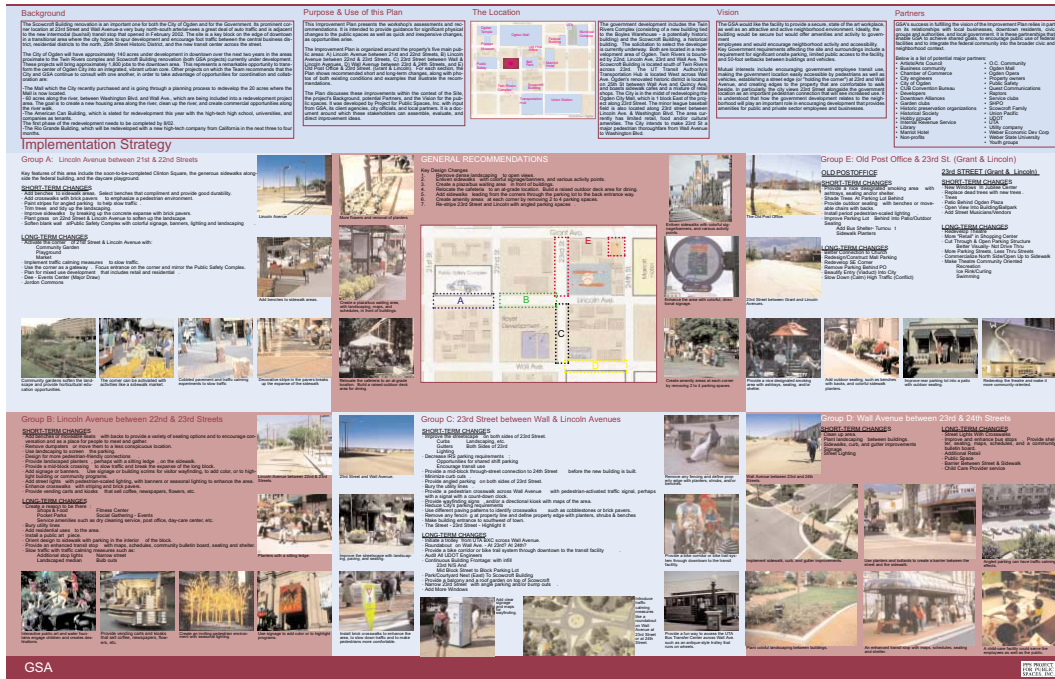
The selection of this 11-acre site in downtown Ogden was the first step towards achieving GSA's customer service-oriented and community-minded mission: "To provide the highest quality work environments for Federal employees, while helping to revitalize the nation's communities." The next challenge was to develop the new site to meet the goals of the IRS and make a positive economic impact on the surrounding neighborhood.



The Partnership Process

Once the site was finalized, GSA led the search for a developer that could meet IRS needs while also supporting city goals. As a first step, GSA held a partnering session with IRS, local officials, and nearby property owners to plan the development strategy. Because the city viewed the street alongside the site as an important pedestrian connection to downtown that would see increased use once the transit center was completed, they requested that the new development be easily accessible to pedestrians as well as vehicles, with edges along the street that would be comfortable to walk along. They hoped, too, that the facility would bring substantial new foot traffic to the neighborhood. Meanwhile, IRS needed the site to provide sufficient parking, and IRS management hoped to address safety and quality of life concerns that had been expressed by their employees. The team began discussing ways that the development could meet IRS needs while supporting both city and IRS employee desires for a high quality environment.

"We wanted to comply with as much of what the city wanted as we could," said Eatough. That meant making adjustments to ensure communication and follow-through every step



of the way. After discussing city and employee quality goals, GSA incorporated a range of design considerations into the Solicitation for Offers (SFO). These were adapted from local zoning requirements, city plans, and site design and landscaping suggestions. GSA also included a city official on the source selection team and involved staff from the city and local utilities at a pre-bid conference to answer developers' questions.

Other partners included the State Historic Preservation Office and the Utah Heritage Foundation, which were included in an advisory capacity through the GSA Regional Historic Preservation Officer during the source selection process.

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA), whose new bus/rail transit facility was scheduled to open across the street from the selected site, was an especially intriguing partner. As a result of their involvement, UTA offered to alter their routes to better serve all eight IRS buildings in the Ogden area, which would encourage transit use by IRS employees, shorten their com-

mute, relieve traffic congestion, and reduce the need for on-site parking.

Once the developer's best and final offer was accepted, GSA brought in Project for Public Spaces (PPS), experts in creating and managing active public spaces, to look at the site design more carefully and convene a workshop of local stakeholders. These included The Boyer Company (project developer), IRS, city officials, UTA, and local businesses. The workshop energized the parties and helped collect more specific suggestions about how the new facility could contribute to a livelier downtown. It soon became obvious that the city's desire to create a more attractive urban environment that anchored the neighborhood went hand-in-hand with IRS's desire to provide an excellent work environment.

The group's suggestions included ways to use the public spaces adjacent to the building; meet parking requirements without creating a harsh paved edge; and provide food service that was accessible to the public as well as IRS workers.

Ogden Improvement Plan. This Improvement Plan visually documents key issues and provides ideas and suggested short and longer term treatments and enhancements for each of the areas analyzed by participants during the Place Evaluation Workshop. This Plan also provides a visual record of Workshop findings and the ideas generated by the participants.



The new Twin Rivers complex includes the renovated Boyle Building and a new 105,000 SF office building.

During this process, each partner provided what it could to make the group vision possible. Boyer Company, the developer, saw the group's suggestions as a way to improve their development, and they were creative in making small but vital design enhancements before construction began. Through this partnering process, IRS was about to receive a vastly improved facility, to be known as the Twin Rivers Complex.

Creating a Downtown Anchor

The Twin Rivers Complex was designed to include the renovated Boyle Warehouse and a new 105,000 square foot office building. Thanks to the partnership with UTA, the finished complex included 100 fewer parking spaces than originally planned. In turn, this allowed the developer to design better site landscaping and a more attractive street edge. The City fur-

ther improved the street edge by extending their downtown streetscape treatments to the site. In November 2002, 800 IRS employees moved into the Twin Rivers Complex. It was later awarded the 2003 Utah Heritage Foundation Award and the Public Building Service Heritage Award for adaptive re-use.

More importantly, IRS was especially pleased with the new facility and the improved neighborhood. At IRS's request, the GSA project team explained the process they had used to IRS employees at the regional headquarters who were also looking to expand.

As the Twin Rivers process moved forward, it became clear to IRS that the improved neighborhood would be just right for a second potential expansion two years later. This second expansion would prove to be important to the Twin Rivers complex as well.



A Second Success

After the success of the Twin Rivers Complex, IRS, GSA, and their local partners began planning a second round of relocation and development. Again, GSA convened a stakeholders workshop, but this time it was held before the issuance of the SFO and involved several prospective developers. This enabled the SFO to incorporate suggestions from the workshop, so developers competed, in part, on their ability to meet facility as well as neighborhood needs. The new leased development would be adjacent to the Twin Rivers Complex. It would be centered on the renovation of the historic Scowcroft Building (95,000 square feet) and the construction of a new 10,000 square foot café that would serve both the neighboring IRS facilities and the public.

IRS's new Scowcroft Building opened in January 2004. When GSA took on the challenge of renovating it, the building had been vacant for 50 years, lacked a roof, was a safe haven for numerous pigeons, suffered from serious fire and water damage, and required seismic upgrading.

Today the building is totally rehabilitated and retrofitted for IRS use. It

remains listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The UTA's IRS-friendly bus routes again had a major influence: 700 parking spaces were originally planned, but increased transit use meant that only 400 were actually needed. The city provided streetscape enhancements, altering the street to accommodate angled parking, which helped calm traffic for pedestrians and provide additional visitor parking. Together, the city and GSA secured a new signal light to improve IRS access to the bus/rail transit center.

Next door to the Scowcroft Building is the Junction City Café, a creatively designed new building that is separate from the main IRS facilities. Separating the café supported the city's preference for mid-block infill and IRS's desire for higher-quality catering. Since the café is open to the public, its customer base is much larger than if it were to serve only IRS employees, and it thus has the resources to prepare better food and keep more flexible hours. Its separation from the call center addresses government security and setback concerns while providing an active neighborhood street use.

The Junction City Café is operated by visually impaired individuals hired

LEFT
The Scowcroft Building in its heyday circa 1906. The building stood vacant for 50 years before it was renovated for IRS.

RIGHT
Now a state-of-the-art office, the renovated building recently won the regional Intermountain Builders award for Best Preservation Project.



Sitting beside the renovated Scowcroft Building, the new Junction City Café serves it as well as the neighboring Twin Rivers complex -- and it is open to the public.

through the Utah State Business Enterprise Program (BEP), and displays art on loan from Bad Dog Rediscovered America, a program that mentors youth through the creative arts. GSA has established a steering committee to oversee this location as a continuing youth art venue with rotating shows and performances. "We're putting together a plan so we can facilitate additional youth arts, from painting to music," said BEP's Kenna Arcury. "We're looking at how to involve the school system and other local arts groups, changing art exhibits on a quarterly basis, and bringing in musical performances."

A Key to the City

Together, IRS's Twin Rivers Complex, the Scowcroft renovation, and the Junction City Café have brought 1,500 IRS employees into downtown Ogden -- and brought the public into closer contact with their Federal agency neighbors. The relocation has played an important role in the recovery of the local economy. After 25 years of decline, downtown is experiencing a rebirth, with new restaurants, condominiums, apartments, town homes, theaters, retail stores, parks, and recreation centers in the process of being developed.

In particular, Ogden Mayor Matthew R. Godfrey has said that the IRS development spurred the city's ability to redevelop its downtown mall. Formerly a big-box style concrete eyesore, the old mall has been demolished to make way for a walkable commercial center reminiscent of an "old west" downtown. The Mayor also praised Tammy Eatough and the entire GSA staff, presenting them with a key to the city for the benefits the project has created for Ogden.

The key to creating both of these successful new developments was in working closely with local government, local businesses, downtown residents, and civic groups. Today, the new IRS developments in Ogden are concrete examples of how GSA and its client agencies can provide the highest quality work environments while helping to revitalize the nation's communities.

For more information about GSA's Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program, visit us on the web at www.gsa.gov/goodneighbor.

While there, you can learn about other projects, get building and contact info for your community, and sign up for our Enews newsletter.