

## **Leadership in Practice, Private Business**

**Recipient: Gardner Company**

### **Description:**

Throughout 2012- 2013, Gardner Company developed pivotal partnerships that jumpstarted the long-planned downtown Boise multi-modal center. The company responded to a Request for Qualifications from Valley Regional Transit soliciting partners for a multi-modal center. Gardner Company, led by Dr. J. Thomas "Tommy" Ahlquist, III, proposed integrating the multi-modal center into the project concept for a new commercial and retail enterprise it was considering on a prime real estate parcel in the center of downtown. The location met the majority of the multi-modal center site-selection criteria established through public outreach in the early 2000s and fulfilled federal requirements for a multi-modal center.

Valley Regional Transit and affected agencies researched numerous possible locations for a multi-modal center for over a decade. In 2006, Valley Regional Transit received a Federal Transit Administration grant of \$9.5 million to construct a multi-modal center. Potential partnerships between Valley Regional Transit and private land-owners failed to materialize and the Federal Transit Administration considered retracting the 2006 grant. Gardner Company's vision to integrate the multi-modal center into its nascent project, the City Center Plaza, proved the linchpin in creating the public/private partnerships necessary to design and construct the transit center and a robust and viable project for downtown Boise. Construction on the multi-modal center is now underway. Gardner Company partners and city center tenants include Valley Regional Transit, Capital City Development Corporation, Clearwater Analytics, Boise State University, and several private enterprises.

Gardner Company's leadership and commitment to transit as a component of a vibrant downtown and essential element in a strong regional multi-modal transportation system transformed the *desire* to build a multi-modal center into a *reality*. Dr. Ahlquist's business acumen and ability to forge partnerships is transforming downtown Boise, helping to develop the economy and contributing to the vitality of the entire region. The City Center Plaza fulfills five goals of *Communities in Motion 2040*, including Goal 1.1 "Enhance the transportation system to improve accessibility and connectivity to jobs, schools, and services; allow the efficient movement of people and goods; and ensure the reliability of travel by all modes considering social, economic, and environmental elements."