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# TIM M. BREUER: You have a chance to develop a vision for Ada County's open space

Imagine Earth Day in 2038. What will the Treasure Valley look like? Will every resident have easy access to open spaces? What legacy are we leaving the next generation of Ada County residents?

Over the past year a dedicated group of volunteers has been working to answer those questions. At the request of the Ada County commissioners, the Ada County Open Space Advisory Task Force was appointed to create a vision for trails and open space in all corners of the county and explore ways to turn the dream into reality. The Task Force's report sets a broad vision for a county-wide network of nature preserves, open space corridors, pathways and trails connecting people to nature and the outdoors. View the report at [www.adaweb.net](http://www.adaweb.net).

This vision for a countywide trail and open space system is far-reaching and an idea whose time has come.

Imagine a ribbon of wild lands, wetlands, parks and farmland along the Boise River, connecting communities while providing access for fishing, biking, hiking and family fun.

Imagine Hubbard, Blacks Creek, Indian Creek, Lucky Peak and Swan Falls Reservoirs as jewels in the desert connected by creeks, waterways and pathways.

Imagine the Snake River and the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area continuing to provide healthy raptor habitat and recreation opportunities.

Imagine large interconnected natural lands throughout the Foothills, connecting people with the outdoors, protecting the scenic backdrop to the Valley and providing wildlife the habitat they need.

Imagine these open spaces connected by pathways and bike lanes, creating a countywide network of parks, natural areas and waterways close to home.

Open space has many values for communities. It is a place to enjoy horseback riding, bicycling or a walk with a friend. It provides wildlife needed habitat and is a place of refuge for citizens looking for a moment of solace in a fast-paced world. It can act as a sponge, softening the effects of high water flows along rivers and streams and helping provide clean water.

Natural areas often are seen as a component to a high quality of life, creating an attractive community to live and work in. And people who live close to open space take advantage of this proximity and tend to get out more, which can be a positive influence on their health and well-being. Many choose where to live based on how close it is to open spaces and trails.

As more people call the Treasure Valley home, we must work together to ensure all residents of Ada County have access to natural areas, parks and trails.

Open space close to home is at the heart of the plan recently presented to the commissioners and, in many ways, is also the "Heart of Our Valley."

Turning this idea into reality will take commitment from citizens throughout Ada County. Working with each community, groups like Idaho Smart Growth, Idaho Conservation League and the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley will be creating ways for you to be involved. This opportunity will be coming soon to your community. Contact the Land Trust office to learn more.

Just as Earth Day in 1970 was like a small pebble tossed into a pond that created lasting ripples, it is hoped this vision of trails and open spaces for all communities will have lasting impact.

Tim M. Breuer is the executive director of the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley.