

CCDC Downtown Boise Parking Structures

Evaluation and Recommendations
Related to Suicide Means Accessibility

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INTRODUCTION

Prompted by a story in the October 16, 2016 Idaho Statesman of a suicide attempt, and a near attempt from a downtown parking garage, the Suicide Prevention Program (SPP) began an informal investigation into downtown Boise public parking garages in an effort to make a determination about potential suicide destinations. Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC) owns and operates the following six parking garages within the downtown Boise area:

Figure 1 - CCDC Garage Names & Locations

1. Eastman – 9th & Main
2. Capitol Terrace – Capitol & Main
3. Grove Street Garage – 10th & Front
4. Boulevard Garage –Capitol & Front
5. City Centre Garage – 9th & Front
6. Myrtle Street Garage – Capitol & Myrtle



The SPP made site visits to each garage and acquired Boise City Police dispatch data for each of the garage locations over the past three years. SPP sought to discover whether the story discussed in the Statesman was an isolated incident, or part of a trend related to suicide means.

POLICE DISPATCH REPORT DATA

SPP was able to obtain Boise City Police records data for calls relating to mental health crises and/or suicidal subjects involving the CCDC parking structures. The calls span from January 1, 2014 through November 1, 2016 and are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1 - Dispatch Calls to all CCDC Garages Jan. 1, 2014 – Nov. 1, 2016

Structure	2014	2015	2016*	Total
Boulevard Garage	-	-	-	0
Capitol Terrace	1	-	-	1
City Centre Garage	1	3	6	10
Eastman	-	-	-	0
Grove Street Garage	-	-	-	0
Myrtle Street Garage	-	-	-	0
			Total	11

*Through 11/1/16

Though the data set in Table 1 is small, it does clearly show that the City Centre garage is subject to more mental health crisis/suicidal calls than any other public garage and that a trend may be emerging.

PARKING STRUCTURES

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 2% of all 2014 suicides were related to jumping or falling, many of which took place from transportation areas such as railways, bridges or parking garages. The International Parking Institute (IPI) conducted a survey in January 2016 among IPI member organizations which showed that 38% of the respondents had experienced a suicide in one of their parking structures with another 20% stating that a suicide attempt had been made in one of their structures. Thus, a majority of 58% experienced suicidal subjects. Parking structures provide easy access to heights, are usually designed in a way that is more open for ventilation purposes, and they typically have fewer security checkpoints as compared with office buildings or other high structures that are closed at night, have regular security detail, and a much more enclosed design.

SPP staff made visits to each CCDC parking structure to help determine why the City Centre parking garage was utilized far more frequently than the other garages by suicidal individuals. The following attributes were taken into consideration:

- Structure Height
- Degree of Enclosure
- Rooftop Accessibility
- Stairway and Elevator Location
- Ledge Design
- Proximity of Adjacent Buildings/Structures

Boulevard Garage

The Boulevard garage is located at 246 S. Capitol Blvd. on the corner of Capitol Blvd. and Front St. The Boulevard Garage is completely enclosed and has no rooftop access. An image of the garage is shown below.



Boulevard Garage Entrance – East Side

Myrtle Street

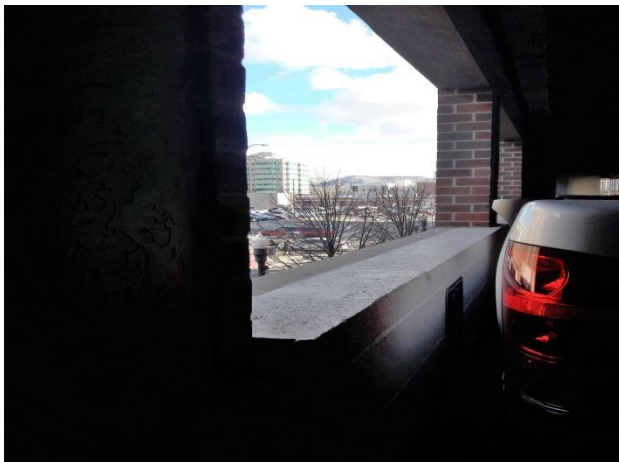
The Myrtle Street garage is located at 451 S. Capitol Blvd. between Myrtle and Broad Streets. This structure has one entrance along Capitol Blvd. and a second entrance from within an alleyway on the west side of the building. The garage is connected to the Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel as well as several restaurants and clothing shops. The structure is four stories high, with three used for parking, including the roof. All stairways and elevators are fully enclosed. The barrier walls are constructed of concrete. Half of the barrier walls are seven inches wide, while the other half are made of 13 inches wide concrete. There is no additional railing atop the concrete barriers. The second and third floor street-side openings are much more enclosed than that of the other structures. Images of Myrtle Street garage are shown below.



Myrtle Street Garage Front – North Side



Fourth Floor Barrier – North Facing



Third Floor Barrier – North Facing



Third Floor Barrier – North Facing

Eastman Garage

Eastman Garage is located at 848 W. Main St. between 8th and 9th Streets with an entrance on Idaho Street. Eastman Garage is adjacent to several restaurants and shops at the street level. The garage is five stories high with four floors used for parking, including the roof. Both the stairway and elevator area are enclosed. The Eastman Garage has two sides looking out over the street, North and South. East and West side walls are enclosed and the top floor looks out onto adjacent rooftops. The barrier walls are composed of concrete and topped with a metal railing as shown below.



Eastman Garage Front – North Side



Fifth Floor Railing – South Facing



Fifth Floor – West Facing



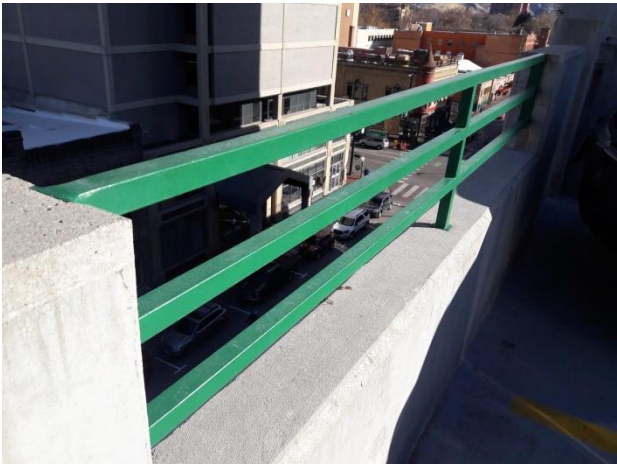
Third Floor Railing – South Facing

Capitol Terrace

The Capitol Terrace Garage is located at 765 W. Idaho St. between Capitol Blvd. and 8th Street with entrances from both Idaho and Main streets. The garage is adjacent to several restaurants and shops. The garage sits six stories high with five floors used for parking, including the roof. Stairways and elevators are fully enclosed within the structure. Capitol Terrace has two sides that overlook the street, North and South. Both East and West side barrier walls are enclosed or overlooking adjacent rooftops. Structure walls are concrete with a metal railing installed atop the concrete barriers on the street-facing, top floor sections. The metal railing is used more intermittently on the lower levels, being placed in between concrete portions. This parking structure was subject to one welfare check for a possible suicidal subject in October 2014. Pictures of the Capitol Terrace Garage are shown below.



Capitol Terrace Front – South Side



Sixth Floor Railing – North Facing



Third Floor Railing – South Facing



Sixth Floor – East Facing

Grove Street Garage

The Grove Street Garage is located at 234 S. 10th St. on the corner of 10th and Front Streets immediately adjacent to Hotel 43 and Chandler’s Restaurant. Entrance to the garage is along 10th Street. The Grove Street garage is five stories high, all of which are used for parking, including the roof. The stairwell and elevator are located in a partially open shaft with railing to enclose the ledge. The barrier walls are concrete and 7.5 inches wide, with no additional railing. Images of Grove Street garage are shown below.



Grove Street Garage Front – South East Corner



Fifth Floor Barrier – South East Facing



Third Floor Barrier



Stairwell / Elevator Exterior

City Centre Garage

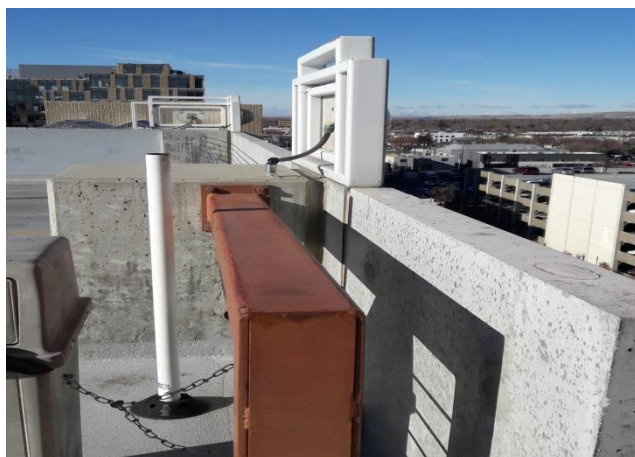
City Centre Garage is located at 312 S. 9th St. on the Southeast corner of 9th and Front streets. Entrance to City Centre Garage is located along 9th Street. The structure stands eight stories high, with seven floors used for parking, including the rooftop. The stairways and elevators to the parking garage are located on the Northwest and Northeast corners of the building and do not have any enclosures aside from a railing. The elevators are accessible directly from the street level and at each stair landing. The garage barriers are constructed from concrete with no additional railings. The ledges are very wide compared with the other garages at 21 inches. Additionally, there are cables installed horizontally to keep cars from hitting the barrier wall. These cables resemble a ladder. From the top floor, there are two street facing sides looking out onto both 9th and Front Streets, the East and South barrier walls look out onto adjacent buildings. Images of City Centre Garage are shown below. City Centre Garage has had ten dispatch calls for suicidal subjects since 2014.



City Centre Garage – West Side



Stairwell / Elevators



Eighth Floor Barrier – North Facing



Eighth Floor Barrier – West Facing

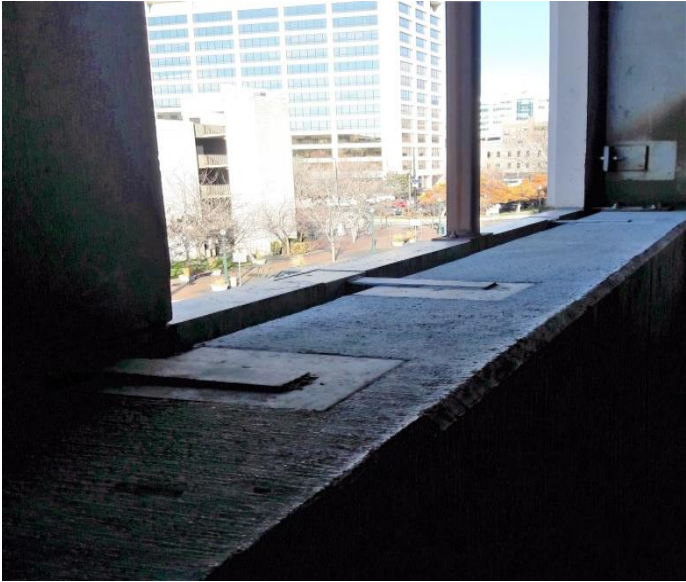
(City Centre Garage images continued)



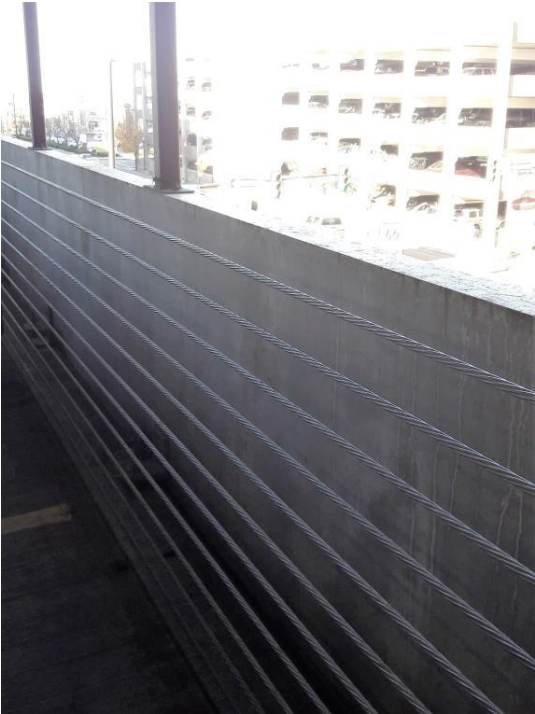
Eighth Floor – Northwest Corner



Eighth Floor Barrier



Third Floor Barrier – North Facing



Third Floor Barrier Cables – North Facing

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The informal analysis of CCDC public downtown Boise parking structures was conducted through examination of and comparison among the six garages. Analysis reveals that the City Centre Garage does contain features that may be more likely to contribute to the consideration of that location as potential means for those who are suicidal, and may explain the high incidence of suicidal subjects from that particular structure. The possibility of an increasing trend in suicidal subject calls to police at this site suggests that City Centre garage could be in the process of becoming a suicide destination.

1. The stairwell is extremely open to the air and accessible. The railing is at a height that most youth and adults can easily climb over and balance on the small lip along the outside.
2. The ledges are much wider than those of the other five garages. The extra width allows for a suicidal person to easily sit or stand for long periods to contemplate their actions.
3. The cables that run horizontally along the barrier walls can act as a ladder for someone to access the ledge more readily.

Parking Structure Design Guidelines Document located via the CCDC website, note on page 31, item 16, that safety and security are an important factor when building structures for public use, and goes on to focus on patron safety related to lighting, landscaping, and trip hazards. Secondary considerations may need to be made to include community safety, specifically making the building less accessible and inviting to potentially suicidal persons.

Based on its findings, the Suicide Prevention Program suggests the following to improve community safety relating to suicide.

Primary Recommendations

1. Enclosing the stairwell with glass or higher railing would still give the illusion of openness, but create a much safer environment.
2. Adding thin metal railing atop the concrete ledges could deter suicidal individuals from choosing the ledge to access their means.
3. Removing the cables or replacing the cables with something difficult to climb would create one more obstacle to accessing the ledge, potentially deterring suicidal subjects.
4. Placing appropriate signage that promotes the suicide prevention hotline would allow for those contemplating suicide to call for help while in crisis. An example of appropriate signage is shown below in Figure 2.

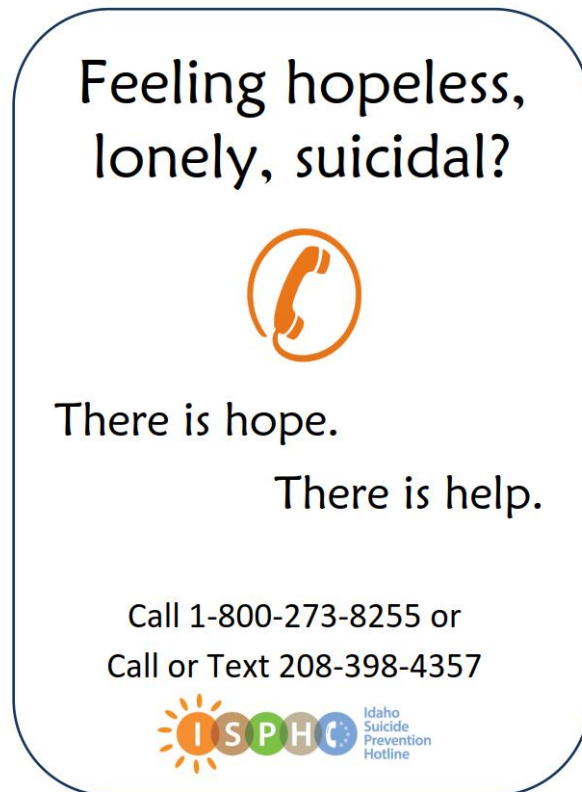


Figure 2 - Appropriate and Safe Suicide Prevention Signage

Secondary Recommendations

1. Geofencing or virtual barriers can act as deterrents. By landscaping the area below the structures with trees, grass and bushes, any open landing area will be depleted.
2. Training security officers and other parking structure personnel in crisis intervention strategies. An IPI survey showed that parking professionals prevented suicides 29% of the time that they intervened.

Understanding the suicidal brain, especially with regard to the means a suicidal person may use to die, is important. The suicidal brain is irrational. When a suicidal person is planning their death, the means or method they use is a critical part of the plan. Suicide prevention expert Dr. Thomas Joiner refers to this as “mental practice.” When access to a particular method for suicide is blocked, the plan has now gone awry. A suicidal person has mentally practiced for that very specific scenario and will most likely not change it at the last minute. This fact is well-researched and backed up by further evidence from psychological autopsies and suicide attempt survivor statements. Joiner and other experts conclude that method substitution is extremely rare. In short, if a person has planned to complete suicide by jumping from a parking garage, they have already chosen the specific garage in advance.

Multiple studies have been conducted on bridges and buildings and it has been proven over the years that barriers do save lives. Listed below are a few examples from studies that have been completed.

Country	Problem / Conclusion
New Zealand	Suicide safety barriers in place for over 60 years were removed in 1996 from a metropolitan area bridge. The bridge was previously a well-known suicide destination. Within 4 years the number of suicides increased 5 times. After reinstallation of the barriers, there were no suicides recorded.
Australia	A new high river bridge was opened near an existing bridge that was known as a suicidal destination. Barriers were added to the existing bridge to prevent suicidal behavior while the new bridge did not have barriers. Engagement of suicidal behavior declined on the bridge with barriers and the new bridge, although very near, did not have any increase in suicide attempts. The majority of people will not choose another method.
Switzerland	In the city of Bern, 29% of suicides are by jumping, with the highest number at the Muenster Terrace. In 1998, a safety net was built. No suicides occurred from the Terrace after its installation.

CONCLUSION

One of the roles of the Suicide Prevention Program is to create public awareness, not only in the sense of getting an at-risk person help, but educating our fellow community members about what they can do to help suicidal people both directly and indirectly.

The Program asks for CCDC's thoughtful consideration of this report with the intention to create a greater level of community safety at City Centre garage. CCDC has been such an integral part of Boise's Downtown development and revitalization over the years and this would be a great opportunity to continue leading the way and perhaps set trends for other development companies that build in Boise. By implementing the suggested recommendations, CCDC could create an environment that is unsuitable and unappealing for those considering suicide by jumping and help to save Boise community members from serious injury and death.

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