



MAKING HISTORY
IN ADA COUNTY



Paula Benson

The Ada County Board of County Commissioners is pleased to present its Making History Award to Paula Benson for her contributions in preserving Ada County's history for future generations.

This year's Making History Award recipient is Paula Benson. Ada County is recognizing Paula for her work in fostering relationships with others to preserve historic structures in Ada County and Idaho.

Early Life

Paula grew up in Phoenix, Arizona. She was an Economics major at Arizona State University and worked as an Account Director in Biotechnology.

Paula became familiar with Idaho and Boise as she would visit her sister in McCall in the 1970's and 80's. She and her husband retired and moved to Idaho in 2010.

Preservation Idaho

Paula has had an extensive involvement with Preservation Idaho. Preservation Idaho is a non-profit organization whose mission is preserving Idaho's historic places through collaboration, education, and advocacy.

Paula became involved in Preservation Idaho through an interest in history. She went on one of their walking tours and got involved by talking with Dan Everhart.

Paula started volunteering with Preservation Idaho by writing for them. She was then asked to join the Board and served as president for seven (7) years.



Paula & Dick Madry at the Erma Hayman House

Her favorite part about being president of Preservation Idaho was having the opportunity to be a part of different activities. She enjoyed working with cities and school districts from across the state. For example, Preservation Idaho and the State Historic Preservation Office worked with the Boise School District on how best to remodel Washington Elementary School with a historically sympathetic renovation. She was a part of a group from Preservation Idaho documenting the history of the Erma Hayman House for CCDC and the City of Boise. This work led to a \$25,000 grant from the National Trust to develop a free streaming tour of the River District.

She is proudest of developing relationships with others. Her business background helped her to forge relationships with others leading to many successful preservation efforts throughout the state of Idaho. She made Preservation Idaho an ally rather than an adversary.

Some of the memorable projects before and during Paula's presidency includes the Surgeon's Quarters at the VA Medical Center in Boise. This was the first time the Federal Veteran's Administration had worked with a private non-profit to rehabilitate a historic structure. This partnership became a national model for them. At the downtown St. Luke's campus they were able to save historic structures by relocating them as an alternative to demolition. Also, the relocation of historic homes from the Central Addition.



Washington Elementary School - Boise

Why Preservation is Important

Paula loves seeing a city that is visually unique. Historic buildings give a community a distinctive and inviting feel. Whereas, a lot of newer structures look the same from one community to the next. There is a story behind historic buildings, which makes them interesting. Historic preservation is sustainable as buildings are reused. In addition, historic preservation is an economic driver through heritage and cultural tourism as well as through restoration.



Surgeon's Quarters at the VA Hospital

ADA COUNTY MAKING HISTORY AWARD

The Ada County Making History Award honors people whose activities today are creating our future history. Ada County is pleased to present its Making History Award to Paula Benson as an advocate for preserving historic structures throughout the State of Idaho.