



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

HOUSING

PART  
I-II

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing affordability remains top of mind for residents across our city, and the City of Boise is committed to providing a place to live for everyone who chooses to call Boise home. We know that too many Boiseans are struggling to stay in their homes, while others are unable to find a home within their budget. While we've been focused on investing funds into our community through federal programs, we know that there is more to be done.

City of Boise staff engaged with the community – both in person and virtually – to talk with residents and hear firsthand the impacts of housing affordability on them, their families, and their neighbors.

The format of this series was focused on understanding the current pain points in our community and providing an opportunity for residents to share personal experiences, brainstorm ideas, and provide recommendations for the city moving forward. Key themes in each discussion included:

### 1. Listen + Share City of Boise Housing Priorities

Understanding that our community is facing a housing crisis, the City of Boise is committed to listening to our residents, and better understanding their needs around housing. Based on continued conversations and data, the city has identified three priority areas to maximize impact: produce new housing where the market is not meeting the needs, preserve units already in existence that serve lower-income households, and house the unhoused.

The tools the City of Boise is using to impact the affordable housing crisis, which were shared with participants, include:

- A. Housing Land Trust
- B. Investment in permanent supportive housing
- C. Preserve current affordable housing

### 2. Moveable Tiny Home + ADU Pilot Program

The Office of Innovation and Design partnered with the Harvard-Bloomberg Innovation Track team to establish a pilot program focusing on moveable tiny homes and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Currently, moveable tiny homes are not allowed in Boise City Code; however, the pilot would allow for a few to be permitted within the city to determine if it's the right tool for us to add to how we are impacting housing affordability and availability. ADUs are currently allowed in certain zones; however, the pilot program would assist members of the community who want to build an ADU and rent it out at an affordable rate. The city would provide resources, reduction in costs, help with permitting, etc., to incentivize residents to participate.

This report presents the results for the first and second series of Community Conversations organized by the Mayor's Office and the Office of Community Engagement. The engagement spanned from October – December 2021 and was used to collect feedback and recommendations from Boise residents on the current landscape of housing in our community.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH OVERVIEW

### 1. Neighborhood Listening Session (Series I)

Two one-hour Neighborhood Listening Sessions were held in October 2021 and focused specifically on listening to residents to truly understand pain points across the city and community sentiment around housing affordability. A brief presentation was given on the current housing market, the city's current efforts, and upcoming initiatives. Boise residents were invited to share personal experiences and input with the staff. The main theme that emerged from the listening sessions was that housing is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. Residents advocated for short-term solutions with compassion for those who are currently experiencing homelessness, living in their vehicles, or being priced out of their homes due to stagnant wages, property taxes, and an exponential increase in the cost of a home.

### 2. Community Conversations (Series II)

The second series of community meetings were held in November and December 2021. Staff presented the priorities of the city, the Boise income scale, as well as the spectrum of housing needs. The spectrum of housing needs highlights the immediate need for affordable housing that focuses on the members of the community who fall within the 60% Area Median Income (AMI) range, which includes those earning \$40,000 or less in a 3-person household. Participants were asked to react and comment on the information provided. The need for a large number of affordable housing units was surprising to most of the community in comparison to the low number of units that have been built in the last year. Staff then presented a suite of potential solutions from housing gaps and innovative solutions to housing needs through an interactive and informative presentation. The objectives of the second series were as follows:

- A. Use the housing data to set the current landscape;
- B. Introduce the participants to the kinds of policy tools that the city is currently implementing to address the affordable housing problem;
- C. Listen to the community on the needs for housing and areas we might not be aware of
- D. Educate residents on the moveable Tiny Home + ADU Pilot Program; and
- E. Engage and gather input on the feasibility of the pilot while also gauging the community's response to potential policy changes.

Invitations to the Community Listening Sessions + Conversations were publicized to the community at large through our website, newsletters, and social media outlets as well as earned media coverage by several media outlets. Invitations were also sent to various stakeholders such as, but not limited to, Neighborhood Associations, the Hispanic/Latino Community, the Cross-Disability Advisory Task Force, and the Boise Chamber of Commerce.

The locations chosen were available on the dates needed – a particular challenge during the holiday season, had accessible parking, and were approachable to residents from diverse populations. During the pandemic, we have also been limiting the size of groups that are meeting and all city properties cap those specific capacities.

Participation numbers for Series I + II are presented below.

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	# OF ATTENDEES
Community Listening Session	October 12	Kristin Armstrong Park	+/- 15
Community Listening Session	October 20	Virtual	45 Live 46 YouTube Views
Community Conversations	November 18	Virtual	55 Live 43 YouTube Views
Community Conversations	December 2	Library! At Hillcrest	+/- 15
Community Conversations	December 15	Boise State University, Bishop Barnwell Room	+/- 40

## FINDINGS + DISCUSSION FROM SERIES I + II

### Addressing Affordable Housing in Boise

The work of this initial session was to hear from the community directly about their anxieties and needs, inventory tools we currently have, and forecast future housing needs.

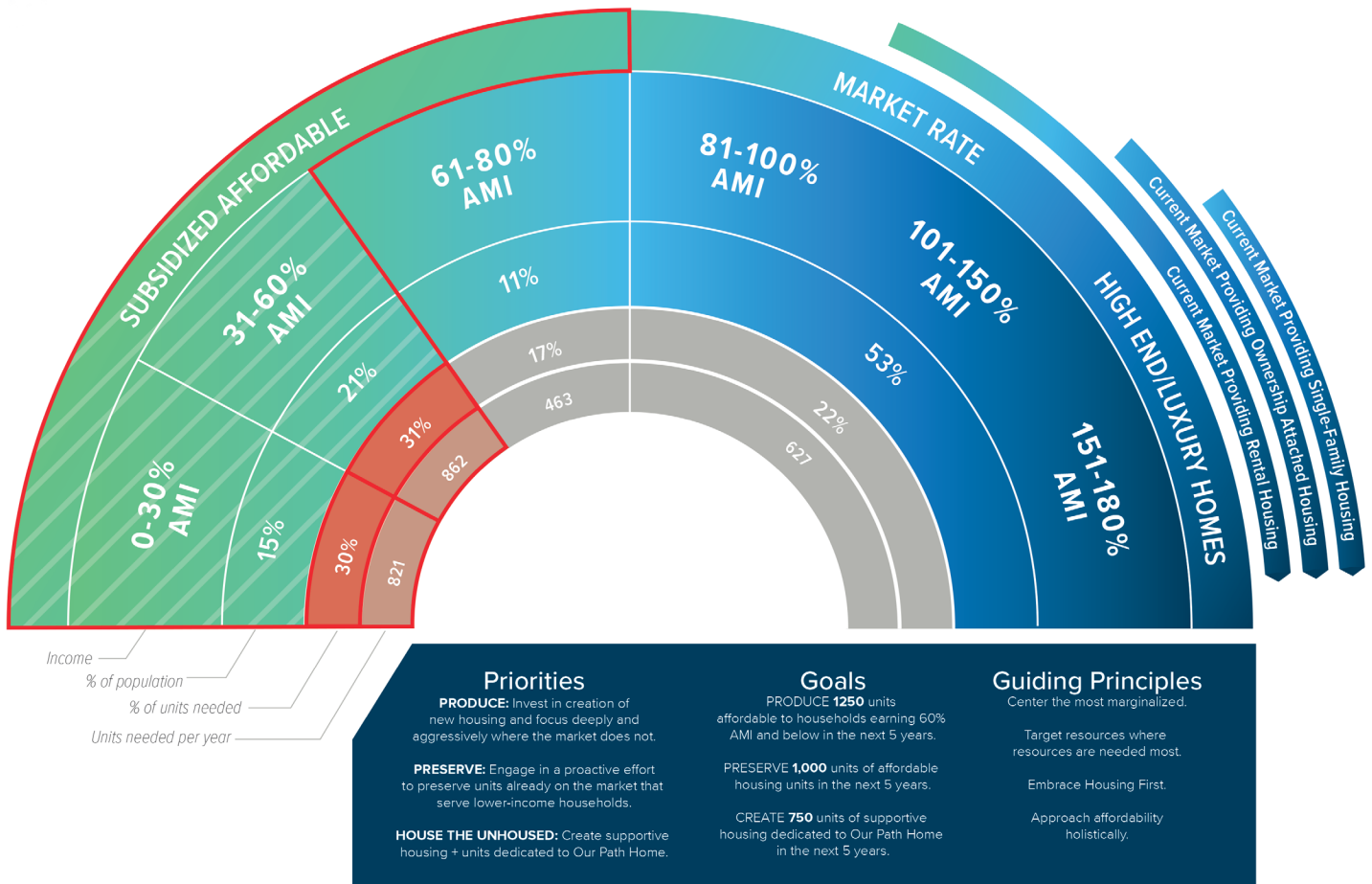
Results given by the participants during the meetings describes the complexity of this issue. The City of Boise has several strategic priorities: one of those priorities focuses on housing to produce, preserve, and house the unhoused long term.

Part I of the series was focused on listening and conversation rather than the collection of hard data. This gave the community a chance to voice their concerns and opinions on immediate housing needs that they are facing. Giving residents this opportunity instills the feeling of being heard. The feedback that we received was the immediate short-term solutions such as the need for supportive housing, additional shelter for those experiencing homelessness and the concerns for growth and the impacts that has on our community members, especially those who are most vulnerable. Many comments were made towards short-term problems such as locations to park for community members experiencing homelessness and the slim number of affordable units in new construction.

Part II of our events were focused on presenting information to the participants and then opening the conversation for dialogue and giving residents a chance to voice their concerns with housing and the pilot program. The information presented in Part II of the outreach focused on the Boise income scale, the housing needs data, as well as the current efforts in progress by the city. Below are the examples of information presented during outreach.

INCOME TYPE	ANNUAL GROSS INCOME	AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI)
<b>Very Low Income</b>	\$20,250	0-30%
<b>Low Income</b>	\$40,440	31-60%
<b>Moderate Income</b>	\$53,900	61-80%
<b>Middle Income</b>	\$67,400	81-100%
<b>Upper Middle Income</b>	\$80,880	101-120%
<b>Upper Income</b>	\$101,100	121-150%
<b>High Income</b>	\$121,3320	151-180%

*Based on 2020 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income limits for 3-person household in Boise Metro*



The feedback on the Boise income scale was very surprising to residents as to the classifications of income types and what is considered low income, very low income, etc. There are real concerns for the rise in rents and home ownership costs in comparison to what the average median income levels are. Property tax, rent increases and rental fees were resounding themes that occurred in the outreach efforts.

The Boise spectrum of housing needs provided a visual on the shortcomings of what the market is producing. The 60% or less AMI group is the group of residents that are being impacted the most, with the least amount of housing being built to support them. It was shared that the City of Boise needs roughly 1,600 new affordable units per year was very surprising to the community and caused a lot of sadness about the shortfalls of our housing market. As the data was presented, residents started to understand that this no longer can be solved alone and will take innovative solutions to help all members of our community.

During the outreach, staff was listening and recording comments made by the community. Two types of data were collected:

1. Group feedback, recorded on butcher paper
2. Slido, interactive tool that captured thoughts + questions anonymously

All data was collected and transcribed. The lead facilitator read through all the comments to develop a sense of the quality and tone of the feedback. Comments from the in-person sessions and Slido were treated the same way. Butcher paper notes featured comments on solutions, potential considerations for the pilot projects, and suggestions we may not have incorporated to date. The findings section on the following pages discusses the results of the community outreach.

During the December 15 outreach event, we used an interactive tool called Slido to engage the participants in a different way. Slido keeps the results anonymous and allows for larger group participation while also showing the responses up on the screen to follow trends. The participants also had the opportunity to send questions directly to the Community Engagement team, who could then ask the experts to answer.

The Slido questions and answers are below.

**Q1: Using one or two words, please describe how you are feeling in relation to the current housing climate?**



**Q2: Have you or someone you know, moved because of housing costs?**

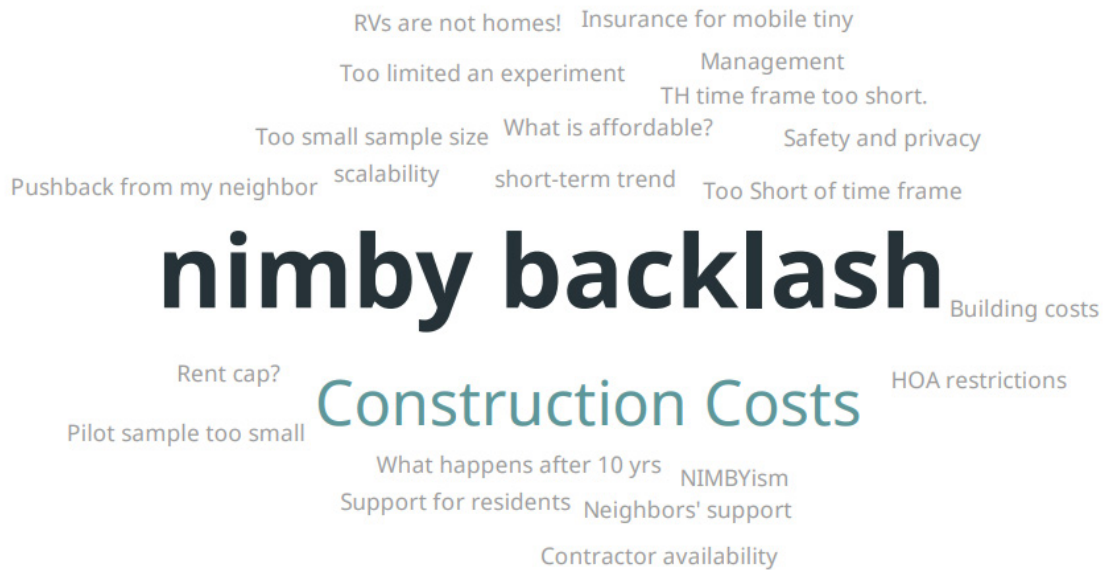


**Q3: If you are a renter, has your rent increased in the last year? If so, by how much?**

- Yes, due to moving rent has increased by \$250
- Yes, \$200
- No chg thankfully
- Yes about 100
- \$97/month
- Yes, \$250/month
- Yes \$400
- \$100/month



**Q4: In a few words, tell us what your biggest concern is for these pilots?**



**Q5: In a few words, tell us what excited you about these pilots?**



**Q6: If you have any final thoughts about today's discussion, feel free to leave them here.**

- The need is now: let's allow more options like tiny homes now and figure out the details later
- I would be interested in what the response would be to off the grid Tiny's (with composting toilets, solar, other)
- Thanks for being here and hosting these learning opportunities
- Would love to see the housing needs assessment
- We need more affordable housing for low income. We need legislative change to allow this to happen. This City needs to be able to have more options to provide incentives to builders and developers to make this happen.

## PILOT PROGRAM: TINY HOMES + ADU

The City of Boise is currently re-evaluating underutilized spaces to determine strategic opportunities with private landholders. This tailored approach to addressing housing needs in our community will provide a variety of housing choices that create compact, dynamic neighborhoods that will not change the character of the neighborhood but support the growing needs of the community.

The current housing data provides a focused view of the housing gaps and financial impacts we need to address. The Innovation Track team shared a suite of potential solutions to understand the needs and concerns of the pilot program.

The Innovation Track Team explained what the research team did in finding creative solutions to our housing affordable issue. The team worked over 2,000 hours, heard from over 200 residents, and had over 500 ideas generated that led to the Tiny Home + ADU Pilot Program. This program would allow tiny homes in Boise City code as well as assistance to place an ADU on your property. Assistance could include pre-approved renderings from an architect, assistance through the planning and development process, assistance with utility hook ups and more. It was important to set the tone for this conversation that nothing was final and the staff would be taking feedback on ideas and barriers that members of the community would face with such a pilot. Questions that were asked to the community were:

1. What excited you about this program?
2. What reservations do you have about this program?
3. Would you be okay with a tiny home in your neighborhood?
4. Would you prefer a tiny home community?
5. Would you put an ADU in your yard to rent at affordable rates?
6. What's preventing you from adding an ADU?

Concerns from the community mostly included parking, utility hookups, the costs and the numbers not making sense, as well as the impact on their rising property taxes. Overall, members of the community were very interested in the pilot program and excited to be a part of the solution.

In conclusion to the outreach events, the overall theme of the feedback was to focus on the short-term issues: rising property taxes, people being priced out of their homes, and people experiencing homelessness while also keeping the long-term goals at the forefront of our actions. Housing is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately and recognizing that the city cannot do it alone is imperative to finding creative solutions for our community.

## SUMMARY

Participant comments were representative of the general feelings of the community: frustrated, sad, and worried that the city cannot continue at the rate of growth without substantial change to the supply in housing. The results of this report suggest that while residents are optimistic about what the city is doing to tackle some of these issues, it simply isn't enough or fast enough.

The groundbreaking at MODA Franklin, the first City Housing Land Trust, was received very positively at all events. The education towards the community was also positively received when general questions were posed as to what type of legislative control the city can impose on landlords to prohibit large rent increases. An overwhelming concern was also on property taxes rising so steeply and out of state investors scooping up a lot of the residential inventory for home buyers.

The feedback about the Tiny Home + ADU Pilot Program was overwhelmingly positive and gave people a sense of "being a part of the change" in their own backyard. The pilot program of course brought up several concerns, upfront costs being the overarching deterrent from people believing they could implement this in their own backyard.

Finally, it was without a doubt a positive experience for most participants who wanted to feel heard, ask questions, learn more about what the city is doing, and be a part of the conversation and solution.

## Next Steps

Phase I and II of outreach are a good introduction into part III of the outreach strategy. Part III will focus on the city's comprehensive work in addressing housing affordability, with discussions around specific tools and programs, most notably the Zoning Code Rewrite. The Zoning Code Rewrite outreach will be in Module 2. The larger conversation will lead to the number of units and types of units needed for the future as well as how the city can get there. One of the most effective strategies for reaching the goals are through the Zoning Code Rewrite. These conversations will be shaped similarly to Phase II and will be longer community conversations, allowing adequate time to have conversations focused on housing needs and the Zoning Code Rewrite.

## APPENDIX / DISCUSSION THEMES / SESSION FEEDBACK

### Identify/communicate with populations at risk of losing housing

- Identify and mitigate barriers that prevent the people actually experiencing housing insecurity from having these conversations with the city
- City should do outreach to people living in vehicles, identify where they are staying overnight
- City should do outreach to 1-30% folks
- Homelessness is increasing among 18-30 year olds
- Senior citizens and people on a fixed income or social security are struggling to keep their homes and don't know where to find support, they also experience ageism in the rental market
- Families struggle to balance rising childcare and housing costs
- People in the service industry often can't afford what's considered 'affordable housing'

### Provide resources for people experiencing homelessness, or living in vehicles and RVs

- Immediate need for safe shelter for people experiencing homelessness
- Non-congregate shelters are safer and more effective
- Increase healthcare resources available in shelters
- Tiny home communities specifically for people experiencing homelessness
- The relationship between police and people experiencing homelessness is not good
- Immediate need for parking space for people who lose their housing
- Adjust parking codes to accommodate people who are living in their vehicles and RVs
- Provide designated RV parking locations – could use city-owned land
- Drive-in movie theaters have restroom facilities that could be used

### Identify opportunities to build/provide more affordable housing

- City could require affordable housing units in new developments via grants or zoning code
- City-owned units would help ensure structurally-sound units for quality of life and health
- Establish tiny home communities, possibly on city land
- Renting part of one's home provides more housing options
- Possible locations for growth include land around Boise or increasing density around BSU
- When developing growth keep safety, security, and food resources in mind



- Use ARPA funds to find immediate solutions to housing
- Including multiple affordable housing types: single family, multi-family, and single person

#### **Provide incentives to develop affordable housing**

- City should provide incentives to developers to increase supply
  - Property tax relief
  - Grants
- City should provide assistance to homeowners to offset rising home prices
- City loan program with lower rates
- Expedite permitting process for developers turning vacant hotels into housing
- Work with Albertsons to build housing in new grocery stores
- Make ADU construction affordable for homeowners, or increase the financial incentive

#### **Preserve existing affordable housing**

- Mobile homes are an important source of affordable housing – we should work to preserve them and increase desire and acceptance in neighborhoods
- Retrofit old buildings or work with current property owners who could convert to affordable housing – are there any processes or incentives in place for this
- Condemnation-worthy rentals could be converted into affordable housing
- Ensure affordable apartments are not low-quality

#### **Improve zoning restrictions**

- Allow Jr. ADUs in zoning code
- Eliminate R1A or allow duplexes in R1A
- Change zoning restriction to no more than 80% of property can be used for the home
- In zoning code, if a small home is torn down, provide flexibility to add ADU in rebuild
- Scrutiny over allowing developers to rezone when purchasing property
- How do zoning requirements get enforced
- In the zoning code, ensure all neighborhoods will have a diversity of income levels

#### **Generate community buy-in on affordable housing and shelters**

- Prevent HOAs from not allowing ADUs
- How can we share stories and bring humanity into the conversation; ensure homelessness is not blamed on the people who are experiencing it
- How can we have conversations with those who do not want to allow affordable housing or high density in their neighborhoods
- Work with neighborhoods that are welcoming to affordable housing

#### **Provide resources/protections for renters**

- Rent control
- Disconnect between landlords and renters

- Provide education, partnerships and incentives for landlords to improve conditions for renters
- Provide better resources for renters

#### **Feedback on Tiny Home + ADU Pilot Program**

- Increase the duration of the pilot program and add participants
- The pilot program will take too long
- Require owner-occupancy on ADUs receiving incentives from the city
- Include RVs in the pilot program
- Keep them in backyards
- Provide incentives to the renters staying in mobile tiny homes, not just homeowners
- Tiny homes increase density and provide equity for owners

#### **Prohibitive costs and barriers for ADUs + tiny homes**

- HOAs that ban ADUs and tiny homes
- Impact fees for ADUs
- Impact on property taxes – tiny homes have less of a property tax increase than ADUs
- Allowing pets
- Parking concerns
- Provide resources for people with questions
- Many RV parks ban mobile tiny homes – thus restricting the flexibility of people who put equity into their mobile tiny homes
- ADU homeowners may end up switching to Airbnb for profit and simplicity – unstable source of affordable housing

#### **Other**

- Need action now
- How do we manage growth?
- Property taxes are increasing
- Can we prioritize selling to primary occupancy homeowners?
- Housing is a Treasure Valley-wide issue, use Ada County stats as context
- Walkability and density in Boise could improve
- Better oversight on large developers and holding companies
- Immediate need to increase availability of affordable housing
- Policy vs. incentives
- Businesses are suffering as employees can't find affordable housing
- State law makes it difficult to force anyone to do anything
- Ensure new affordable housing fits people's needs
- Plan a panel of mayors on housing issues
- Housing equity replaces pensions/security
- Workforce housing affordability calculations are off (CCDC)