

# Executive Summary

Rapid growth, increasing housing costs, and overall City of Boise goals to promote more active and healthy living compelled the City of Boise to undertake a more health-focused Housing Needs Analysis. This required document is the Community Development Analysis (CDA).

Health is a complex state of being that describes a multitude of elements that comprise basic human needs for living. Health is not simply access to health care or avoiding chronic diseases such as cancer or heart disease.

Access to quality, affordable, and stable housing are key factors of an individual's, family's, and a community's health. When any one housing component—quality, affordability, or stability—is compromised, human health is shown to decline. When more than one occurs, the results can lead to degradation of individual and population health. These are issues that are not addressed through an analysis based solely on housing unit needs.

Healthy housing means a home is structurally sound and free from hazards, is accessible to a variety of income levels, and people not forced to move against their wishes or experience homelessness due to housing costs, wages, or housing integrity.

Over the past 120 years, the leading causes of death in the U.S. have changed dramatically. Conditions in cities related to clean water access, sanitary sewers, and overcrowding led to many health epidemics in the 1800s and early 1900s. A variety of city-focused planning laws (zoning being one of them) has resulted in nearly wiping out communicable diseases as a leading cause of death in the United States.

In 2020, chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, are now leading causes of death. Evidence-based research demonstrates a correlation between chronic disease and housing. This is why City effort to merge housing and health themes in this CDA is the start of a multi-year effort to define projects, programs, and policies that further address housing access and affordability through a slightly different lens.

Figure ES-1 highlights the three dimensions of interconnectedness: housing quality, affordability, and stability. A central point of this graphic is how changes in any of these spheres creates stress, which contributes to chronic illnesses.

This stress arises from events such as having to forego medical appointments in order to pay rent or from children experiencing behavioral health challenges due to unstable housing conditions.

**Figure ES-1: Connections Between Housing Quality, Affordability, and Stability**



This CDA injected a fourth dimension into this connection: Neighborhood. A neighborhood is categorized by the built and natural environment in which someone lives, works, and plays, in consideration of the prevailing population characteristics, as well as the many organizations and institutions part of a person's immediate location.

By looking at neighborhood factors, such as socioeconomic and health-specific data along with field observations and interviews with community stakeholders, we can identify areas where a neighborhood's quality, affordability, and stability are already challenged or at risk.

This report highlights the methods and findings of that effort to inject neighborhood level considerations into the paradigm of quality, affordability, and stability.

## Trends

The City of Boise is constantly working independently and with partners to improve housing conditions. As conditions change, it is critical to stay ahead of challenges and prevent new ones from emerging. Several themes emerged through the CDA process when data was aligned with field observations and dozens of interviews with individuals and organizational representatives. These themes are included below and examined with further detail in Chapter 6, Field Review & Input.

## Overall Themes

- **Housing Costs are Relocating Residents.** Increases in rents, mortgages, and property taxes are forcing Boise residents to relocate to find less expensive housing options.
- **Housing Costs Mean Vouchers are Not as Effective.** For those seeking financial help for housing expenses like federal Section 8 Vouchers, the increase in rent has meant vouchers are not covering as much of costs and fewer property management companies accept them.
- **Tenants Fearful of Reporting Unhealthy Issues.** More renters are tolerating unhealthy living conditions due to fear of reporting problems leading to lease termination.

## What is Working

- **Housing Efforts.** The City embarked on several housing initiatives over recent years. One project, Adare Apartments, has provided a reduced lease on City-owned property. There is still a demand and need for similar projects.

**Figure ES-2: Household Survival Budget Estimate**

Source: United Way ALICE Report, 2018

Household Survival Budget, Ada County		
	SINGLE ADULT	2 ADULTS, 1 INFANT, 1 PRESCHOOLER
<b>Monthly Costs</b>		
Housing	\$487	\$789
Child Care	\$-	\$1,126
Food	\$177	\$586
Transportation	\$346	\$692
Health Care	\$196	\$728
Technology	\$55	\$75
Miscellaneous	\$149	\$449
Taxes	\$224	\$489
<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>\$1,634</b>	<b>\$4,934</b>
<b>ANNUAL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,608</b>	<b>\$59,208</b>
<b>Hourly Wage</b>	<b>\$9.80</b>	<b>\$29.60</b>

- **Crime Control & Prevention.** Boise has low crime rates compared to similar-sized cities.
- **School Support.** Boise and West Ada School Districts provide much needed support and services for residents, particularly children. The services offered, such as the Community Schools model, extend well beyond academics and can include offering rent and utility support options, counseling, and essentials such as food and housewares.

## Needs

- **More Spectrum Based Housing.** “Spectrum based housing” refers to housing options that align with the income spectrum of area residents. As wages lag housing costs due to a lack of supply, prices for existing housing soars resulting in misalignment. As more homes are built, housing prices should lower allowing more access to all wage earners.
- **Mental Health Services.** Across the board, all interviewees felt mental health services were in great need. An example of a success story was the Boise School District contracting to provide behavioral health services to students and student families.
- **Housing Policy.** The City of Boise, Ada County, and the numerous partners within the region continue to work towards common goals in the housing arena. Continuing these endeavors is vital for helping the private sector grow housing options for all residents along the income spectrum.
- **Mobile Home Improvements.** For many, the costs to maintain their property is either prohibitive or determined by a property manager. In order for such affordable units to remain viable, repair programs and financing options should be explored.



It is cost-prohibitive to maintain or upgrade a mobile home, leading many to defer improvements. This creates public health hazards and makes residents more vulnerable to displacement.

- **Explore Adaptive Reuse.** Big box development continues to struggle across the U.S. Boise has also seen its fair share of large retailers shutter, leaving behind structures with square footage exceeding 75,000-100,000 and parking lots to accommodate a commercial use that far exceed residential trip generation rates. This, along with pending moves like Idaho Transportation Department leaving its State Street headquarters property, offer opportunities outside the norm to address housing needs.

### Concerns

- **Housing Costs.** The ramifications and ripple effects from increases in median housing price and rent means many area residents are having to spend more of their income on housing costs and forgoing other household expenses.
- **City Outreach and Methods.** Desire by those interviewed for more inclusion from organizations, such as those serving the homeless, food pantries, and other non-profits. There are partnership opportunities and an overall willingness of these organizations to help the City better understand the needs of who they serve.
- **Family Homelessness.** Interviewees pointed to refugee programs as a model of a limited support network and that non-refugee low-income families need similar support networks.
- **Labor Shortages.** One reason new housing construction has not kept up with demand is an on-going skilled labor shortage. Numerous factors contribute to the shortage of labor but Idaho is not immune and contractors are struggling to fill positions both newly created or replacements.