



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Zoning Code Year-1 Review

The adoption of Boise's new zoning code marked a milestone in the city's efforts to implement *Blueprint Boise*, the comprehensive plan, and to modernize its development processes. This memo provides a summary of the first year's (December 1, 2023, to November 30, 2024) volumes and impact, focusing on how the zoning code contributes to goals related to:

- Housing Supply and Diversity
- Focusing Development in Key Areas
- Sustainable and Resilient Development
- Transportation Choice
- Economic Opportunity

While this data provides valuable insights, it is still early to draw definitive conclusions or make substantive changes to the new code. Several of the code standards have only been tested with a handful of projects. Continued monitoring will be essential to ensure the code remains effective in achieving its goals.

Year-At-A-Glance

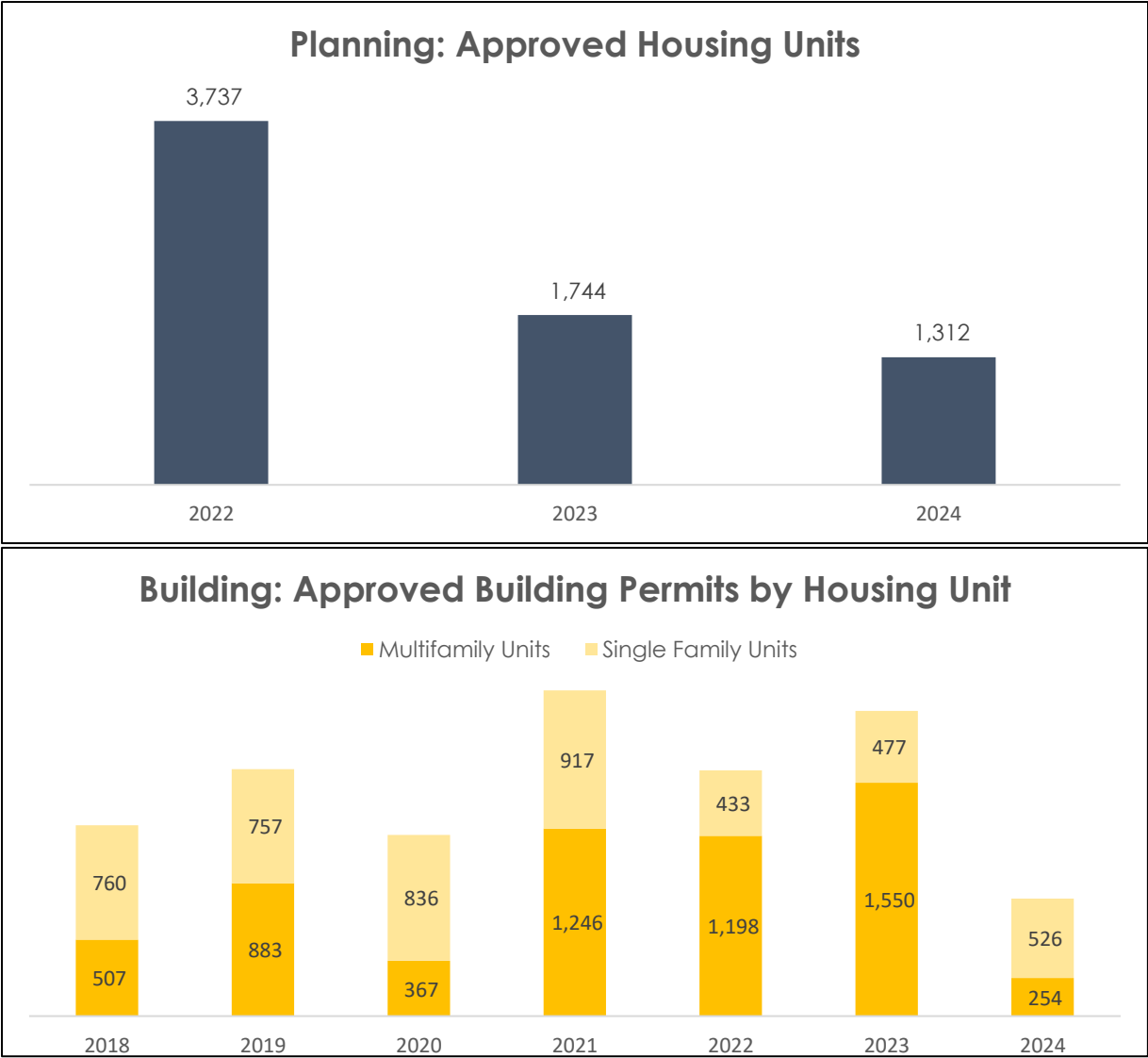
The first year of the new zoning code saw significant volume and tangible impacts. Key metrics that demonstrate the year at-a-glance include:

Process + Volume	Community Involvement	New Projects	Natural Resources + Infrastructure
17,610 Front Desk Calls	329 Development Tracker Subscriptions	1,016 Housing Units (excludes SP-01, SP-02, SP-03)	717 Trees
1,140 PLNs Received	42,426 Development Tracker Visits	776,564 Nonresidential Square Footage	4.9 Miles of New Sidewalk
810 Concept Review Meetings	141 Neighborhood Meetings		854 Feet of Pathways Secured
69 Interdepartmental Review Meetings	61 Public Hearings		1,226 Bike Parking Spaces
996 Applications Submitted			
576 Approved Projects			

Housing Supply and Diversity

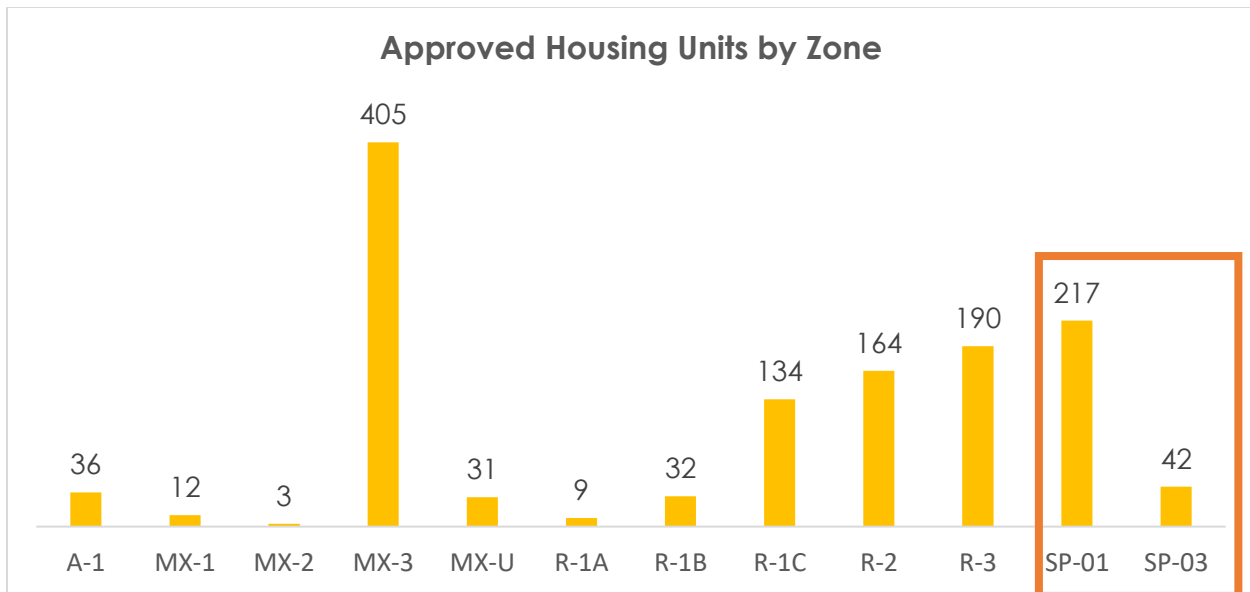
One of the goals of the new zoning code is to increase housing supply, but the amount of housing developed each year is influenced by many factors beyond just zoning

regulations. In 2024, the number of approved housing units decreased compared to previous years. This trend is also reflected in building permit data. This trend is likely not a result of the new zoning code but instead may represent a leveling out of development pressure after the record-setting volumes from 2021 and 2022, as well as being slowed by higher interest rates.

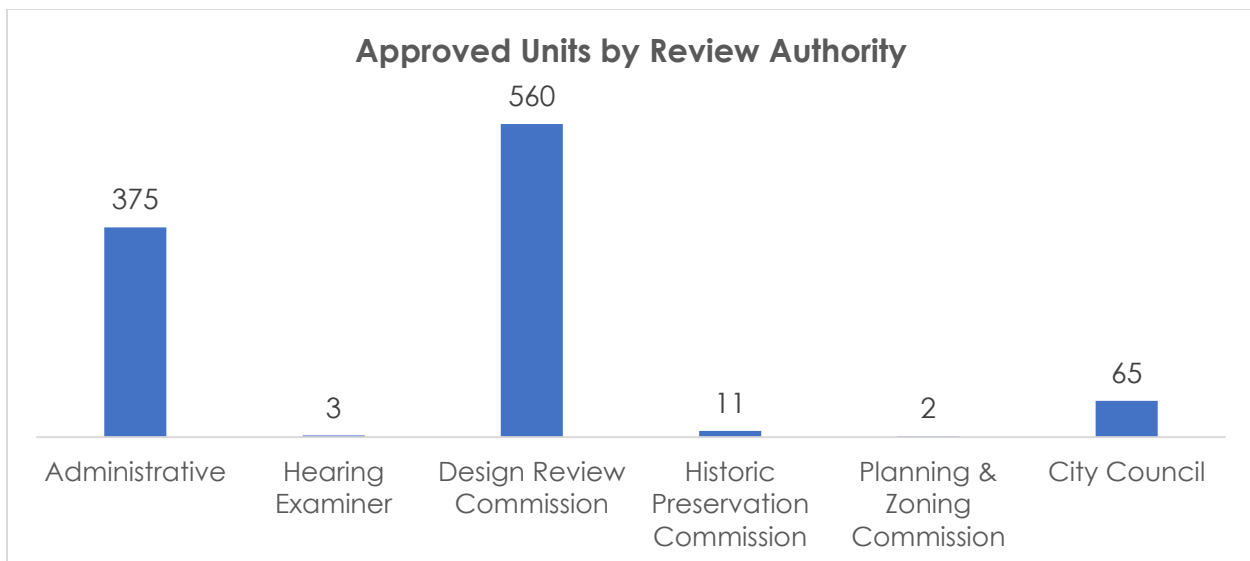


A review of housing supply by zoning district shows that most new units were in the MX-3 and R-3 zones, consistent with the zoning code's goals for increased housing in higher-density residential and mixed-use areas. In addition, the Harris Ranch Specific Plan (SP-01) and Syringa Valley Specific Plan (SP-03) have seen continued implementation, with new housing development contributing to that area's growth. However, since the Specific Plans were not impacted by the new zoning code they have been omitted from the remainder of the analysis.





Regarding review authority, 375 of the 1,016 approved units were approved administratively, while 560 units were approved by the Design Review Commission. This reflects the zoning code's balance between streamlined approvals for smaller projects and design oversight for larger developments. City Council housing approvals may be lower in this first year due to the time it takes for a Type 4 Project (a project requiring City Council approval such as a rezone or annexation) to move through the formal planning process (neighborhood meeting, interdepartmental review, Public Hearings, etc.).

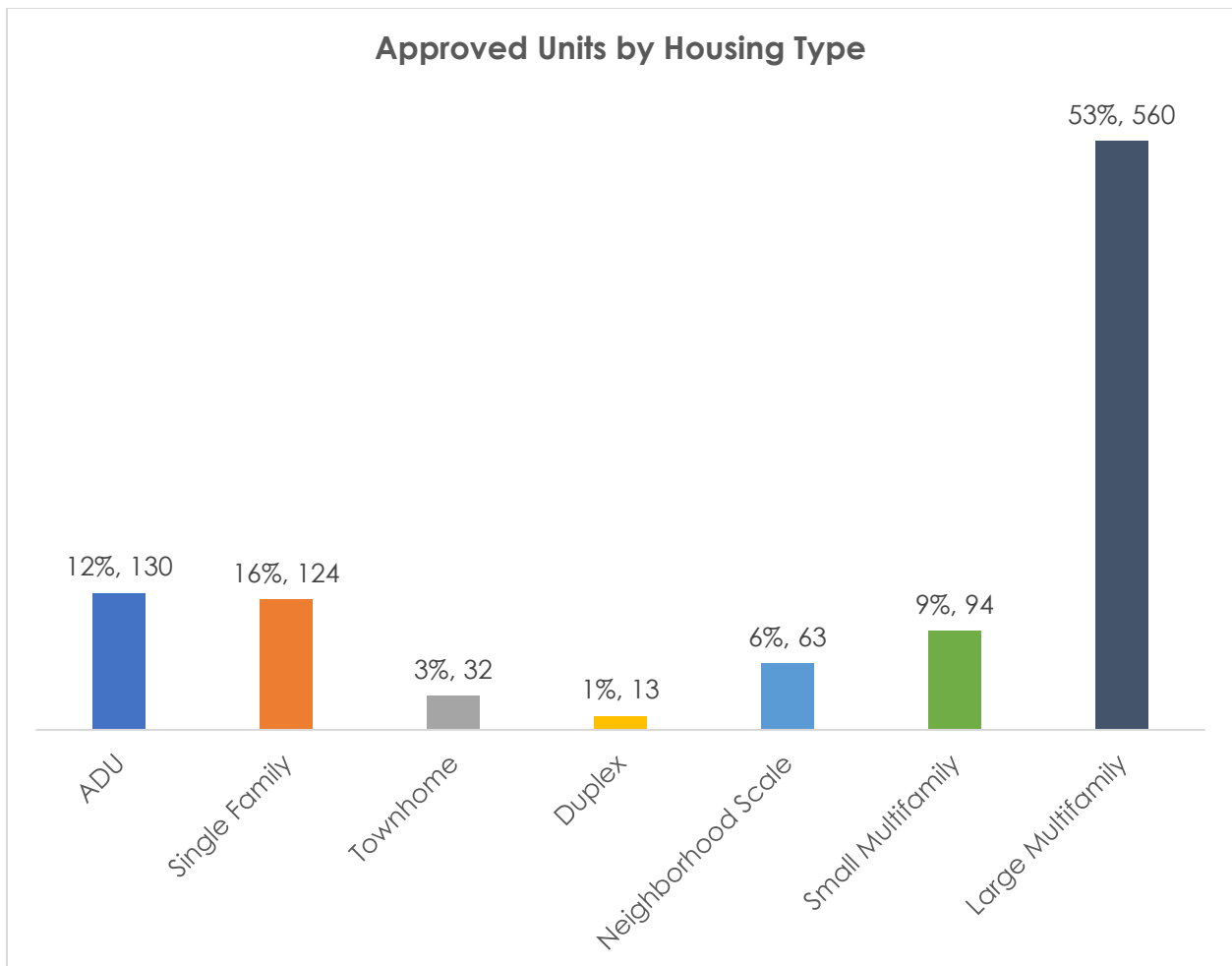


A goal of the new zoning code is to increase the diversity of housing options available to Boise residents. In its first year, most housing units were part of large multifamily projects, developments with 50 or more units (560 units or 53% of all units). However,



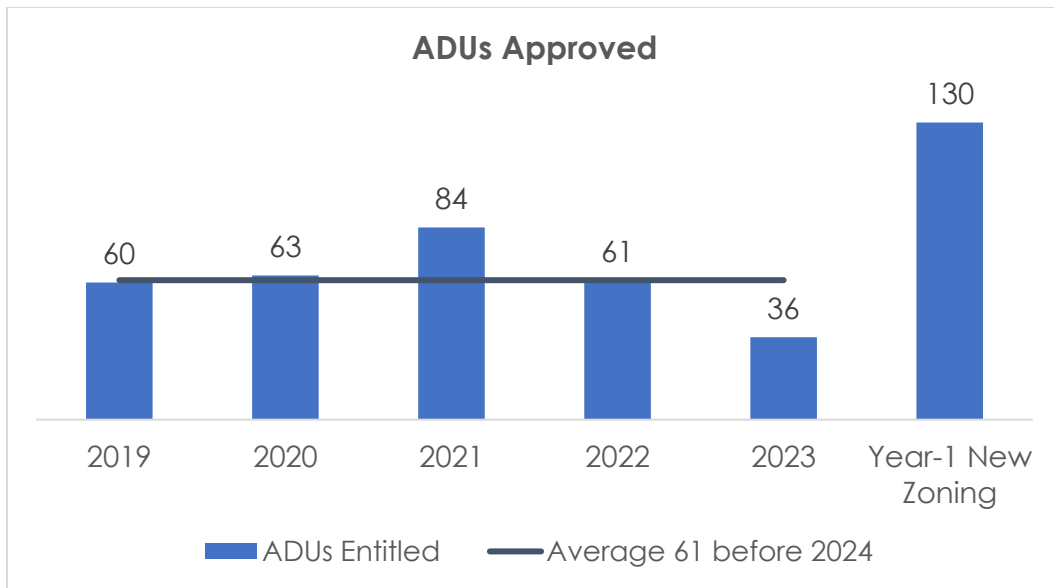
smaller-scale developments also contributed to housing diversity, with 9% of units (94) constructed in small multifamily projects (developments with 13-49 units) and 6% of units (63) within Neighborhood Scale Housing (developments with 3-12 units).

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) also played a significant role in housing choice. More ADUs were permitted than single-family homes were permitted, with 130 ADUs approved compared to only 124 single-family units. It is important to note that the number of Single-Family Homes may be lower due to the time for a subdivision approval to move through City Council as well not all Single-Family Homes receive planning approval, many go straight to building permit.

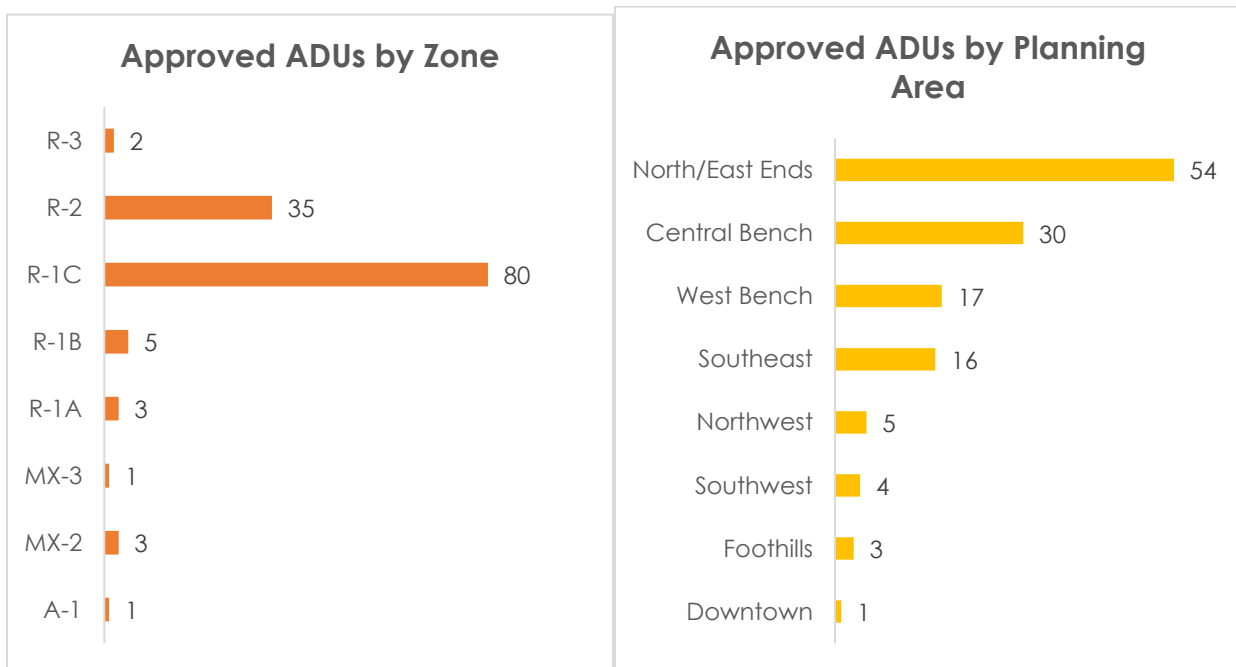


The total number of approved ADUs (130) exceeded previous years' approval numbers, marking a 113% increase from the five-year average of 61 ADUs per year. This growth likely reflects increased demand, perhaps driven by zoning code changes that removed barriers to construction, such as raising the maximum unit size to 900 square feet and by eliminating the owner-occupancy requirement.





ADUs were primarily approved in the R-1C Zone (Residential Traditional) but were distributed throughout the city. The North/East End and Central Bench neighborhoods received the largest shares of ADUs, with 41% and 23% of approvals, respectively. Early analysis shows that since the adoption of the zoning code, the percent allocation of total ADUs has become more geographically dispersed, with Central Bench, West Bench, and Southeast starting to take on a larger share than previous years.



Housing Incentives

A key component of the new zoning code is the inclusion of incentives designed to encourage affordable or sustainable housing. These incentives include increases in density, height, or permitted housing types, as well as reductions in parking requirements in exchange for dedicated affordable units or building with sustainable practices.

Three approved projects, both located in the R-1C zone, utilized the affordability incentive, resulting in three affordable units. Another 7 projects are within the review pipeline and are considering including affordability.

Three projects utilized the sustainability incentive. These projects vary in size and type ranging from a 194-unit multifamily development on the Central Bench to a fourplex in the North End. In total the sustainability incentive has resulted in 398 sustainable units. Another 2 projects are in the pipeline. While this represents a modest start, it highlights early engagement with the program. In partnership with the Department of Organizational Effectiveness, PDS is working with Urban Economics to conduct an economic analysis of the Zoning Code Incentives. The results of this study will be presented to Council later this year.

Focus Development in Key Areas

A critical piece of the new zoning code was to focus development in key areas such as Downtown Planning Area, Best-In-Class Transit Routes (State Street, Vista Avenue, and Fairview Avenue), Regional and Community Activity Centers as identified in Blueprint Boise, and Mixed-Use Zones. Below shows the number of units and amount of non-residential square footage added in each key area.

	New Housing Units	% of All New Units	Non-residential Sq. Ft
Downtown Planning Area	234	22%	271,541
¼ Mile of Best-in-Class Transit	107	10%	12,562
¼ Mile of Activity Center	34	3%	11,299
Other Mixed-Use Zones	204	19%	173,482
All Key Areas	579	54%	468,884

Additionally, there was a focus on aligning development with citywide priorities such as emergency services and parks access. 96% of all new units (975) were within Boise Fire



Department's response time area. Fire Response is determined by existing road network which could expand with development and increase coverage. 95% of all new units (965) were within a ten-minute walk of a park.

Sustainable & Resilient Development

The new zoning code prioritizes sustainable and resilient development through specific landscaping, design, and connectivity requirements. A citywide goal is to increase the tree canopy. Through development a total of 717 trees were planted (161 evergreen trees and 556 deciduous trees). Current data does not capture how many trees were removed but future data tracking efforts will ensure that number is captured. Additionally, \$42,150 was added to the Tree Mitigation Fund, enough to purchase and plant approximately 140 more trees.

The zoning code identifies sensitive lands, such as floodplains, hillsides, the wildland urban interface and areas near the airport, where development must be carefully considered to minimize environmental and safety risks. In the first year under the new code, 248 new housing units—representing 23% of all new units—were approved within these sensitive areas. The majority (201 units, or 19%) were located within the floodplain, while Hillside/Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas accounted for 43 units (4%). Only four units were approved near the airport, making up less than 1% of all new housing. This data highlights the importance of continued monitoring to ensure that development in sensitive lands aligns with the city's goals for sustainable and resilient development.

Transportation Choice

The zoning code aims to encourage development near existing transportation infrastructure while building new infrastructure that enhances the efficiency, comfort, and safety of walking, biking, and transit use.

A total of 842 housing units (82%), were located within ¼ mile of a bus stop. Additionally, 773 housing units (76%), were located within ¼ mile of an existing pathway such as the Greenbelt or Federal Way Bike Path or a pathway identified in the Pathway Master Plan. Through development the city secured over a quarter mile of pathways: 600 feet of pathway easements, and an additional 854 feet of pathways will be installed when the development is constructed. Nearly five miles (4.9 miles) of new sidewalks were constructed across 33 projects.

Safe and secure bicycle parking options were also expanded. A total of 1,226 bike parking spaces were included in approved projects. When looking at residential projects that required bike parking – this on average is about 1.5 bike parking spaces



per unit. When considering commercial projects with bike parking requirements – this on average is 2.6 bike parking spaces per 1,000 square feet.

Under the new zoning code, vehicle parking requirements saw modest adjustments. There were four requests for parking reductions, with no projects exceeding the maximum allowable parking limits. The zoning code reduced required parking for Single-Family, Duplex, Triplex, and Fourplexes from two parking spots per unit to one parking spot per unit. Six of these types of residential projects utilized the new, lower parking minimums. However, 11 of these types of projects opted to provide more parking than required, suggesting that while flexibility in parking standards is being utilized, demand for parking remains a consideration for many developers. This data will be important to monitor as the city continues to promote transportation choice.

Economic Opportunity

A key priority of the new zoning code is to create opportunities for businesses and residents to contribute to and participate in the local economy.

Local and small-scale commercial development included the approval of 2 neighborhood cafes in the R-1C zones, 18 small retail spaces (up to 5,000 square feet each) totaling 15,962 square feet, and 10 medium retail spaces (5,001–10,000 square feet each) totaling 35,662 square feet. Of these small-scale developments, eight were in the MX-3, three in MX-2 zone, and two in MX-1.

Childcare services were expanded, with 30 daycare facilities approved, including 10 family homes (serving 1–6 children), 12 group homes (serving 7–12 children), and 8 centers (serving 13+ children) in the first year. These approvals provide much-needed childcare options across Boise. While not all home-occupations require a permit, three home occupation or live-work projects were permitted.

Industrial development was a standout contributor to economic opportunity, with 301,090 square feet approved across 9 projects. Two of these projects were approvals for the Micron expansion totaling 182,550 square feet.

Summary

The first year of Boise's new zoning code has provided insight about volume and impact. Early data suggests that while the zoning code is supporting its intended goals—such as increasing housing diversity, encouraging sustainable development, and focusing growth in key areas—other external factors like market conditions also play a significant role. The data collected so far underscores the need for continued monitoring and ongoing evaluation.



To ensure the zoning code continues to meet Boise's long-term goals, the city is continuing to monitor the code's impact through partnership with the Department of Organizational Effectiveness:

- Post-Application Process Survey & Interviews: Gathering feedback from applicants who have completed the planning approval process.
- Economic Evaluation of Housing Incentives: Assessing the economic viability of affordability and sustainability incentives.
- Boise State 5-Year Housing Supply Study: Providing long-term comparative analysis of housing supply.
- Online Zoning Dashboard: Offering a data platform for tracking development activity.

Next Steps

As we continue to assess the zoning code's impact, PDS recommends additional data be collected before policy changes to the code be implemented. PDS recommends proceeding with a Zoning Ordinance Amendment that captures continuous improvements—targeted adjustments that refine and clarify regulations that were identified by staff, Commissions, applicants, and community members during the code's first year. These refinements will address any immediate implementation challenges while allowing more time for data collection and trend analysis.

