



CITY OF BOISE

YOUTH ROADMAP

2025



CITY *of* **BOISE**

CREATING A CITY FOR EVERYONE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
METHODOLOGY.....	6
YOUTH WELLBEING.....	7
Key Findings	8
Recommendations	11
ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES	13
Key Findings	14
Recommendations	18
INFRASTRUCTURE	21
Key Findings	22
Recommendations	24

APPENDIX

REFERENCES	26
CITY OF BOISE DEPARTMENTS & PROGRAMS	27
STAKEHOLDERS.....	39

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boise is home to nearly 50,000 people under age 20: one in five residents. While our city offers robust youth programming, remarkable outdoor recreation, strong schools, and a culture of community connection, young people and their families face barriers that prevent many from fully accessing opportunities and support.

Three interconnected problem areas emerged from our research with 269 youth, 717 parents, and dozens of community stakeholders:



YOUTH WELLBEING

Only about a third of Boise youth feel mentally healthy each day, with academic pressure, mental health provider shortages, and cost barriers compounding mental health challenges. While mental health awareness efforts exist, major gaps remain in early intervention, treatment access, and recovery support. Youth call for better mental health education, more trauma-informed counselors, and better access to help within schools, while families cite struggles with limited providers, long wait times, and complex referral systems.



ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

Despite a rich landscape of options for youth activities, cost barriers and geographic and seasonal disparities limit participation in arts, sports, and enrichment programs. While the City of Boise and youth-serving organizations have robust community programming for young people across the city, many families struggle to afford program fees or transportation to reach opportunities. Youth crave deeper social connection and belonging, emphasizing the need for opportunities to earn money and contribute to the community, as well as spaces where they can gather, play, create, and simply be themselves.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation is the biggest barrier to youth access in Boise, with teens calling for cheaper buses, better routes, and safer bike and pedestrian options, especially in underserved areas. High costs and limited transit deepen inequities, restricting access to programs and basic needs. Though most youth feel safe and enjoy Boise's parks and community spaces, teens and parents want stronger neighborhood identity and local gathering hubs to build belonging and connection across the city.



THE SOLUTION: CITY LEADERSHIP WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

The City of Boise plays a critical convening and coordinating role as the anchor that enables community organizations to work together effectively. This roadmap focuses on what City departments can do directly, as well as how they can support community partners to expand impact.

HOW TO GET THERE: IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The recommendations that emerged from this research represent high-impact opportunities to address gaps and improve the experience of all youth in Boise.

■ YOUTH WELLBEING RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations include expanding prevention programs, addressing provider shortages and care access barriers, and supporting community-wide communication to improve awareness and navigation of existing services.

■ ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations include addressing cost and geographic access barriers, providing options for non-competitive sports and more arts and music programming, addressing seasonal gaps, providing volunteer and youth employment opportunities, and supporting project-based learning.

■ INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations include improving public transit coverage and awareness, bringing programming to neighborhoods, and supporting third spaces across the city.

THE PARTNERSHIP

Success requires authentic collaboration. This roadmap recognizes that City of Boise departments and dozens of youth-serving organizations do exceptional work supporting Boise youth every day. The goal is to coordinate, amplify, and fill gaps, particularly around mental health prevention, cost barriers, transportation access, and geographic equity.

City departments can expand their direct youth programming while also creating infrastructure that makes community organizations more effective together: venue coordination, shared schedules, resource pooling, communication channels, and decision-making processes that honor both youth voice and organizational expertise.

The City of Boise serves as convener and coordinator – supporting this work while acknowledging the vital role played by independent organizations with their own missions and governance.

When we invest in young people, we invest in Boise’s future. The community we build for today’s youth will shape the community they build for their children tomorrow. This roadmap provides the framework for City departments and community partners to work together toward a shared vision: a Boise where every young person has the spaces, opportunities, and support they need to thrive.





METHODOLOGY

HOW WE APPROACHED THIS WORK

Understanding what young people and families need requires listening carefully to a variety of perspectives. During spring and summer of 2025, we used multiple research methods to capture both the big picture and the nuanced details of youth experiences in Boise.

- **SURVEYS**

We surveyed 269 youth aged 12-20, as well as 717 parents and guardians across the city. We collected responses from every ZIP code in Boise, recognizing that experiences vary by neighborhood.

- **FOCUS GROUPS**

Numbers can only tell part of the story. To understand the nuanced experiences behind the statistics, we conducted eight focus groups: four with youth and four with parents. We spoke to 30 youth and 26 parents in these discussions.

- **STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

We conducted 46 in-depth interviews with community leaders, service providers, and organizations that work directly with youth. This included representatives from City of Boise departments (Parks & Recreation, Fire, Police, Arts & History, Library, WaterShed, etc.), healthcare systems, schools, mental health providers, recreation programs, and community organizations.

- **SECONDARY DATA**

Alongside surveys, focus groups, and interviews, we reviewed existing data sources to better understand the broader context of youth wellbeing in Boise. This included national, state, and local reports on mental health, education, housing, safety, and recreation.

WHAT THIS RESEARCH CAN AND CAN'T TELL US

This research captures perceptions and priorities of current Boise residents during spring and summer 2025. It reflects the experiences and aspirations of families who participated. While we worked to ensure representation across zip codes and demographic groups, some populations may remain underrepresented in our findings.

What this research provides is a summary of the youth experience in Boise, clear priorities for improvement, and a foundation for strategic planning – with City departments positioned to lead coordination and expand youth programming.

We surveyed **YOUTH AGED 12-20**, as well as parents and guardians across the city.



YOUTH WELLBEING



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A SAFE AND HEALTHY CITY FOR EVERYONE



YOUTH WELLBEING KEY FINDINGS

Only a third of Boise youth feel mentally healthy every day, with academic pressure emerging as a primary stressor. Ada County recorded 16 youth suicide deaths in 2023, underscoring the urgency of strengthening mental health support. While City departments and community organizations provide upstream prevention programming, gaps exist in early intervention, treatment access, and coordination across the continuum of care. Nearly half of parents say provider shortages are the greatest obstacle to care, with cost and insurance issues affecting many families.

The Institute of Medicine's Continuum of Care framework highlights the way that the City and the community work together across the Continuum from promotion (building overall wellbeing), prevention (addressing concerns early), treatment (meeting acute needs), and recovery (sustaining wellness) to serve our youth.

PROMOTION: BUILDING OVERALL WELLBEING

Promotion encompasses the protective factors that strengthen and build youth wellbeing overall: this includes physical activity, sense of purpose, social connectedness, access to joy, and having at least one trusted adult outside of a parent or guardian. Cities play a key role in promoting youth wellbeing by ensuring they grow up in a safe environment in which they can learn, grow, and thrive. See the Activities & Opportunities section for insight on how these factors are currently addressed in Boise.

PREVENTION: ADDRESSING CONCERNS EARLY

Only 34.3% of Boise youth feel mentally healthy every day (Communities for Youth, 2024), meaning nearly two-thirds regularly experience some level of mental health challenge. In focus groups and the 2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey, youth called for open dialogue about mental health, parent education about mental health (47%), and peer support groups (31%). Families and friends, as well as health and education partners across the city, are vital to improve the prevention landscape by identifying and addressing mental health concerns as they emerge.

Prevention services include mental health education, early screening, and targeted interventions to address emerging concerns before they escalate. Youth in Boise express clear interest in preventive approaches, particularly in school settings: 38% of youth prioritized learning about mental health in school, 32% want direct access to mental health help within school settings, and 37% emphasize the need for counselors trained in trauma (2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey). This shows the importance of mental health approaches that provide help where youth are already.

TREATMENT: MEETING ACUTE NEEDS

When prevention and promotion are insufficient, youth need access to treatment services including counseling, therapy, crisis intervention, and intensive clinical care. Although Boise has local hospital systems, healthcare partners, and community organizations focused on meeting healthcare needs, significant gaps in access and treatment capacity create barriers for families seeking care. Data shows the severity of need: 20.6% of Idaho youth ages 12-17 experienced a major depressive episode, 14.1% reported serious thoughts of suicide, 6.4% made a plan and 4.0% attempted suicide in the past year (SAMHSA, NSDUH 2022–2023). Ada County recorded 16 youth suicide deaths in 2023 (Idaho Statesman, 2024).

In the 2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey, parents identify systemic challenges as the greatest obstacles to care: 46% say there are not enough providers available, and 39% report extended wait times that delay care when most urgently needed. Cost and insurance issues affect 45% of families, and 36% struggle to navigate systems to find the right resources. The referral process was identified as a barrier by 22% of families, and 16% reported transportation challenges. Together, these barriers create a system that excludes many youth, particularly those from lower-income and marginalized families.



“In an ideal world, the community as a whole would believe **WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OUR YOUTH.** Community members would step up to be a trusted adult in the lives of the young people in their community.”

– Parent Survey

RECOVERY: SUSTAINING WELLBEING

Recovery services focus on long-term support that helps young people maintain wellness after treatment, build resilience, and continue growing. For young people, this means creating relationships, skills, and opportunities that sustain long-term wellbeing. Nearly a third of youth (31%) identified peer support groups as a priority, while 30% said they want more trusted adults to talk to, reflecting the recovery dimension of community support and social networks (2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey).

Youth consistently describe wanting ways to help and serve the community, underscoring that contributing to something larger than themselves is part of maintaining mental health. Supporting long-term recovery requires building out intentional systems of peer support, mentorship, and meaningful engagement opportunities including civic engagement, volunteering, and leadership roles.

ADDITIONAL YOUTH WELLBEING CONSIDERATIONS

- **HOUSING INSTABILITY**

Housing instability is significant: in the 2023-24 school year, 9,125 students in Idaho were identified as homeless, about 2.5% of the student population (Ada County Homeless Coalition, 2024). More than half of families with children experiencing homelessness in Idaho (54%) were unable to access shelter, compared to just one in ten nationally (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024). Our Path Home, for which the City of Boise is the lead agency, brought a \$3.29 million award from HUD's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program in October 2024 to develop youth-centered systems for preventing and ending youth homelessness.

- **VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

Some groups of young people in Boise face additional challenges that require targeted attention. LGBTQ+ youth in Idaho face higher rates of mental health challenges, with 38% statewide seriously considering suicide in the past year and 12% attempting suicide (The Trevor Project, 2024). Only about one-third of LGBTQ+ youth in Idaho say their community is supportive. Though many Boise kids describe the city as safe and kind, some youth report that racism or exclusion undermines that experience; youth who rated their overall experience negatively often linked it to discrimination or lack of welcoming youth spaces. Refugee teens noted challenges in feeling integrated or welcomed, which can amplify isolation.



“I just think we need to **HELP ADULTS UNDERSTAND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH BETTER.**”

– Youth Survey



YOUTH WELLBEING

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROMOTION & PREVENTION

Promotion and prevention represent critical parts of the Continuum of Care by building resilience, creating supportive environments, and addressing stressors before they escalate to clinical challenges. By working upstream to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors, communities can promote youth wellness.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Expand youth-facing prevention programs such as calming spaces, peer support groups, and skill-building that address root causes of stress.
- Support parent education initiatives to help families better understand and support youth mental health.
- Expand access to activities and opportunities that foster youth wellbeing.

TREATMENT & RECOVERY

Once wellbeing concerns emerge, it is vital for youth to be able to access the treatment and recovery resources that they need.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Expand access to mental health treatment by addressing provider shortages, wait times, cost barriers, and navigation challenges.
- Expand crisis intervention and response capacity.
- Strengthen school-based mental health and wellness infrastructure.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Address transportation barriers preventing youth and families from accessing treatment services.
- Strengthen recovery support systems that connect youth leaving intensive treatment to pro-social activities and organizations.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Cost and transportation emerged as primary barriers across all domains. While all Boise youth face these barriers to some degree, vulnerable populations often face additional barriers to accessing services.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Support the development of community-wide communication initiatives to strengthen awareness of available resources.
- Establish geographic standards to ensure distribution of youth programs and third spaces across neighborhoods, particularly in systematically underserved areas.
- Support low or no-cost programs in high-demand areas such as school meals to reduce stigma and ensure access.
- Amplify the work of care navigation services that help families understand and access resources without getting lost in complex systems.





ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES



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OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE



ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES KEY FINDINGS

Boise youth have many kinds of interests: artistic (singing, dancing, painting, photography), active (skating, hiking, swimming, skiing, cycling, martial arts), skills (gaming, cooking, entrepreneurship), and simply hanging out with friends. Boise offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to access joy and fulfillment, but barriers such as awareness, skill level, cost, and transportation limit access to these existing programs. In addition to personal growth, these programs provide opportunities to form relationships with peers and trusted adults.

CREATIVE ARTS PROGRAMMING

Youth express strong interest in creative programming: 28% of youth prioritize art studios and creative spaces, 21% seek more music programs, and 15% want theater opportunities (2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey). Clear disparities exist in program quality and availability across schools and neighborhoods, creating educational gaps that mirror economic patterns. Parents specifically identified arts program gaps between schools with adequate funding and those without, reflecting the relationship between school district resources and access to pro-social activities.

“I think there should be more opportunities for **PUBLIC THEATER, SINGING, DANCE**, stuff like that that don’t cost as much money.”

– Youth Focus Group



“Winter gets difficult. Teens and families need **CONNECTION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WINTER.**”

– Parent Survey

RECREATION & THE OUTDOORS

Sports and active recreation provide young people with opportunities to develop teamwork, discipline, physical fitness, and social connections. Youth take part in organized sports via Parks and Recreation, school teams, and club organizations. However, parents say that the rise of club sports and competitive school teams has created a youth sports culture that requires a certain level of skill to participate. They emphasize the need for more informal or no-skill-barrier sports opportunities and highlight the economic barrier that club level sports present, often preventing children from lower income families from participating.

Boise’s outdoor recreation system – stewarded by Boise Parks and Recreation – creates natural supports for wellbeing. Youth and parents consistently identify outdoor recreation and nature as some of the city’s best assets. The Greenbelt, Quinn’s Pond, Ann Morrison, Rhodes Skate Park, foothill trails, and our many neighborhood parks serve as anchors in youths’ daily lives. However, the winter and fire season present barriers to recreation options; indoor recreation is often less accessible due to cost and location.

PURPOSE & SELF-EFFICACY

Youth express a clear desire to contribute meaningfully to their community; this fosters their sense of purpose through civic engagement. They want to see the City provide opportunities for youth to get involved. The Youth Climate Action Council demonstrates the City’s capacity to give youth a true decision-making voice through real projects with City departments. Many youth express a desire to contribute through service, volunteering, or leadership opportunities; parents say they’d like their children to grow up to be confident, independent, and happy adults.

EDUCATION

Because youth spend such a significant amount of time in educational settings, it is no surprise that academic pressure was a primary concern for Boise youth (2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey). This pressure comes from multiple directions: parental expectations for college preparation, peer competition made more visible through social media, and institutional measures that emphasize test scores and graduation rates.

Students question the relevance of much of their coursework to their futures. While Boise School District maintains an 83.9% graduation rate, only 45% of students report feeling engaged (Idaho Department of Education, 2024). Student engagement is high in early grades (over 70% in grades 3 and 4) but drops steeply to just 30% among high school students, with nearly 1 in 5 students (18%) feeling entirely disengaged (Idaho Department of Education, 2024). Youth want education that balances academic rigor with real-world relevance, purpose, and opportunities for authentic engagement.

WORK & SERVICE

For Boise youth, jobs mean far more than income. Employment is described as a pathway to independence, a chance to learn practical skills, and a way to build relationships with adults outside their families. Across all city departments in 2024, the City of Boise employed nearly 200 teens aged 15-18 as seasonal employees (lifeguards, camp counselors, etc.)—up from around 150 teens in 2023. However, despite strong motivation, many Boise youth face barriers when trying to enter the workforce. Common obstacles include age restrictions, transportation challenges, and reluctance to hire youth. Access to employment depends on family circumstances and social connections, reinforcing imbalances already present in other areas of youth development.

Youth consistently express a desire for ways to help and serve the community. Service represents a pathway to build skills, strengthen social connections, and contribute to something larger than themselves. Yet opportunities to participate meaningfully remain limited; many organizations report that youth volunteer roles can sometimes create more work than assistance if they are not intentionally designed. The gap between strong teen interest and the limited availability of accessible, well-structured opportunities means that Boise is not yet fully harnessing youth energy for civic engagement.



“I think adding even more accessible ways for people to **GET INVOLVED WITH VOLUNTEERING AND RECREATION** would be a good thing.”

– Youth Focus Group



“A lot more public spaces that youth can go to hang out and be there and **FEEL SAFE WITHOUT PARENTAL SUPERVISION OR AN ADULT AROUND.**”

– Youth Focus Group

SOCIAL CONNECTION & BELONGING

Social connection includes the quality of relationships young people have with peers, adults, and their broader community. While 61% of Boise youth say they have a trusted adult in their life outside of their parents or guardians, 26% are neutral or mildly confident about having such relationships, and 13% say they do not have a trusted adult outside their family (Communities for Youth, 2024). This underscores the importance of mentorship programs, school-based relationships, and community programming that builds sustained adult-youth connections. National research shows that youth who are mentored are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college, 46% less likely to begin using drugs, and 27% less likely to start drinking (MENTOR).

Informal social opportunities give young people space to build friendships, find support, explore identity, and feel a sense of belonging. Boise youth currently gather in coffee shops, Hyde Park, thrift stores, Roosevelt Market, and one another’s homes. While youth value these spaces, each has limitations. Survey results show that 12% prioritized the creation of more general social spaces, and another 14% specifically asked for teen-only environments (2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey).

Youth describe a clear vision for the kinds of spaces they want. They emphasize the importance of safety and adult presence, but also stress that these spaces should not feel overly structured or supervised. They want places where they can be themselves without constant oversight, where they can gather with friends, study, create, or simply exist without being expected to purchase something or participate in a structured activity.



ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESS TO ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

Addressing access barriers by providing flexible cost options in tandem with neighborhood-based programming is the first step to boosting youth participation.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Implement sliding-scale fees across programs to improve access for families with varying financial resources.
- Expand neighborhood-based programming to ensure every young person has access to opportunities.
- Support culturally responsive programming and multilingual outreach to ensure refugee and immigrant families can access youth programs and services.

ARTS, RECREATION & OTHER INTERESTS

Being involved in programming helps our youth form relationships, explore their interests, develop their identity, and gain self-confidence.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Support the creation of free art classes and programs.
- Expand access to sports and arts recreation by integrating materials into existing parks, libraries, and community spaces.
- Expand recreational sports that emphasize skill-building, teamwork, and community over competition.
- Support adaptive recreation opportunities for youth with disabilities.
- Address seasonal gaps in the winter and fire season by supporting year-round recreation options.

EMPLOYMENT & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Teen employment serves many purposes: building work skills, earning independence through income, learning responsibility, exploring career possibilities, and contributing to their family. While many teens say they want to work a part-time job, they struggle to find opportunities and compete with the adult workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Support the development of youth-specific job training, job boards, and placement programs that address barriers to teen employment.
- Coordinate apprenticeship and internship programs that connect youth with local businesses and organizations.
- Support career and technical education programs, building on successful models such as DTEC.
- Address teen employment gaps and stakeholder staffing shortages by connecting youth with these opportunities.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE

Civic engagement and service learning provide structured pathways for youth to experience agency, develop leadership skills, connect with caring adults, and see tangible impact of their contributions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Support structured volunteer opportunities, mentorship pathways, and civic engagement programs to foster youth sense of purpose and self-efficacy.
- Support and encourage youth-led service initiatives that allow them to serve their community while learning how to plan and execute a project.
- Consider offering longer-term volunteer opportunities that allow youth to learn and contribute over time.

“There’s a lot of good community service events here. I used to help out with a lot of them in my free time. And **IT WAS HEARTWARMING TO SEE THE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO HELP.**”

– Youth Focus Group





EDUCATION & LEARNING

Education is a significant part of all youths' lives. When students engage in project-based learning that addresses real neighborhood challenges, their education becomes tied to civic engagement. Many youth currently feel disengaged and disconnected from their education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Integrate stress-reduction strategies into schools to balance academic rigor with student wellbeing
- Expand the Community Schools model, where schools serve as comprehensive hubs pairing academics with wraparound supports.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Support intergenerational programs that connect youth with trusted adults and mentors.
- Support project-based learning initiatives that link academic content to real-world problems and community impact.
- Support digital literacy and responsible technology use programs that help youth navigate online spaces and use technology safely and productively.



INFRASTRUCTURE



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MOVEMENT FOR EVERYONE



INFRASTRUCTURE

KEY FINDINGS

TRANSPORTATION: A CORE ACCESS CHALLENGE

Transportation emerged as the single most common barrier to youth accessing opportunities in Boise. Evening bus service ends by 10 PM, weekend service operates on reduced schedules, and only 18.7% of Boise roads have bike lanes – far below the 30% regional target (COMPASS, 2024). In the 2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey, 49% of teens say that free or lower-cost bus passes would improve access, 41% called for buses that run more frequently and reach more areas, and 60% call for safer bike lanes and better sidewalks outside of the downtown area.

Transportation challenges are not experienced evenly: Southeast and West Boise lack adequate bus access, and gaps exist between Meridian and Boise. Regional data shows that only 34% of households in Ada and Canyon Counties are within a half-mile of a transit stop, unchanged since 2021 and well below the regional target of 48% by 2030 (COMPASS, 2024). The current state of teen mobility places heavy reliance on all parents, a problem that is compounded by location and financial status. Transportation gaps also disproportionately affect youth with disabilities, refugee families, and teens seeking independence.

COST BARRIERS: OBSTACLES TO OPPORTUNITY

About 34% of Ada County households (approximately 48,000 families) live below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) threshold (United Ways of the Pacific Northwest, 2025). Cost barriers affect access to programming, mental health services, sports leagues, art classes, and basic needs like food (10.4% of children experience food insecurity, per United Ways of the Pacific Northwest, 2025). Youth in single-adult households or households where both adults work multiple jobs also face activity awareness gaps, as they do not have the same amount of time and social connections to learn about opportunities.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR BELONGING

Survey data shows that 91% of young people feel safe in their neighborhoods (2025 Boise Youth Roadmap Survey). This sense of security combined with abundant outdoor spaces creates opportunities for gathering. Existing community assets such as parks, the downtown area, and the Greenbelt function as natural gathering points.

Despite these opportunities, disconnection persists. Parents describe feeling that they have to do everything themselves, whereas past generations relied on their community to share responsibility. Community disconnection creates intergenerational implications: with parents feeling disconnected and isolated, young people have fewer opportunities to interact with adult mentors and role models in community settings.

Both teens and parents express strong interest in infrastructure that creates neighborhood identity and local gathering opportunities. Teens describe wanting neighborhood hubs and community identity for each part of the city, while parents call for more neighborhood associations, localized community centers, and “third spaces” (a location that is neither home nor work/school and provides a space for relaxation or recreation). The North End is frequently mentioned as a successful model. Its walkable mixed-use design combines residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, creating an environment where people can come together in the course of daily life.



“Transportation for my kiddo to get places. **I AM A CONSTANT TAXI.** Lack of easily accessible and quick public transportation.”

– Parent Survey

“I worry about **SAFETY ALONG MAJOR ROADS** with kids and bikes.”

– Parent Survey





INFRASTRUCTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY & AWARENESS

Navigating around Boise is essential for all youth. Boise's Valley Regional Transit system exists but remains underutilized by youth due to awareness gaps, cost, limited service hours, and lack of confidence navigating independently. Many youth and parents express concerns about the safety of walking and cycling around town.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Expand programs that provide free or reduced-cost youth transit passes to all teens and youth, including orientation and confidence-building opportunities for first-time users.
- Address safety concerns and navigation barriers that prevent teens and youth from using transit independently.
- Expand safe biking and walking infrastructure near schools and neighborhood destinations.
- Expand bicycle access programs and safety training to teens and youth who lack equipment.
- Explore resource-sharing models to coordinate transportation for specific events.

DISTRIBUTE PROGRAMMING THROUGHOUT NEIGHBORHOODS

Boise has strong foundations of programming infrastructure, but geographic opportunity concerns persist. The majority of programs occur downtown, leaving Southeast and West Boise as the neighborhoods with the most potential for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Distribute programming throughout neighborhoods, bringing opportunities closer to where youth live.
- Support neighborhood fixtures (schools, libraries, recreation centers) as wellness hubs, building on successful Community Schools models.

THIRD SPACES & SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Youth need safe gathering spaces beyond home and school where they can socialize, build relationships, and develop community connections. Youth, parents, and community members express the desire for intergenerational community connection.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF BOISE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Support the development of youth-friendly “third spaces” throughout Boise neighborhoods.
- Create intentional infrastructure that brings neighbors together across cultural, economic, and social differences.



“I feel like in neighborhoods, it’d be cool if it was a lot more mixed use. More restaurants, more businesses, just **COOL SPACES THAT WERE IN NEIGHBORHOODS** where people primarily lived, kind of like people get like Hyde park. That would be cool.”

– Youth Focus Group



APPENDIX

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CITY OF BOISE

DEPARTMENTS & PROGRAMS





BOISE ARTS & HISTORY DEPARTMENT

The **BOISE DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & HISTORY** is a leading cultural agency recognized for fostering a sense of belonging through accessible and place-based arts and history. Their programming cultivates a distinct sense of place that reflects Boise's rich past, diverse communities, and unique natural setting.

- A&H Annual Grants - awards \$150,000 annually in grants to individuals and organizations working in the cultural fields, many of whom serve youth groups (e.g. Ballet Idaho, LED, MING Studios, Open Arms Dance Project, Treasure Valley Children's Theater, TRICA, etc.)
- James Castle House – historical site, exhibition space, and artist in residency program that provides school tours and outreach opportunities.
- Erma Hayman House - historical site and exhibition space that provides school tours and outreach opportunities.
- Boise School District Curriculum Support – through partnership with BSD content supervisors, A&H is working towards developing supplemental arts and history educational materials to amplify student learning.
- Fighting Bob - A&H developed a children's book series, Fighting Bob, to learn about Boise's history with real-life ostrich and "Cele-bridie", Fighting Bob. The series has been distributed widely in 3rd and 4th grade classrooms in Boise-area schools and is available at the Boise Public Library.
- Arts & History Student Commissioner – opportunity for High school student participate in civic engagement by sitting on the Arts & History Commission.

BOISE FIRE DEPARTMENT

BOISE FIRE DEPARTMENT strives to be leaders in public safety, employee wellness, professional advancements and community connection by responding to the community with pride, service and dedication. They provide fire safety education, emergency services training, and youth career development programs in fire and emergency services.

- Teen Fire Safety classes
- Junior Fire Marshal Program - comprehensive program includes virtual preschool classroom and visits to 1st and 2nd graders, including interactive learning through the Fire Safe House mobile classroom. Reach about 7,000 students each year.
- Dennis Technical Education Center Firefighting Program (High school students) - Boise firefighters help as guest instructors
- Ignite Bootcamp - free program for teens and adults to explore the experience of being a firefighter. Applications open in March, typically held during May/June. On average, 55 teens participate each year. 2025 was the 4th year it has been offered.
- Youth Fire-Setting Intervention Program - individualized education and assistance for children who have misused fire. Children attend with their parent/guardian. Professional referrals when needed.



BOISE PARKS AND RECREATION

PARKS AND RECREATION provides comprehensive recreation programming, facilities, and services for youth and families throughout Boise. Their mission is to enhance Boise's quality of life by working in partnership with the community to foster and support citizen well being and community environments.

- **Youth Activities:** Parks and Recreation offers hundreds of youth-based activities across the city for youth, which are published and promoted in our seasonal Activity Guide for all youth ages. Most activities are fee based, with many scholarships available. Programming includes classes, events, and activities such as dance, tennis, rock climbing, martial arts, hockey, ice skating, music, swim, etc. Teens may join adult leagues at 14+ or 16+ in some sports.
- **After-school programs:**
 - Kid City is offered for youth 1st-6th grade at eight elementary schools (M-F, 3:15/3:45-6pm). Kid City has a \$20 annual registration fee.
 - Teen City is offered for youth 7th-9th grade at two junior highs (M-Th, 2:30-5:30pm). Offers dinner, open play, field trips, and a variety of structured activities (sports, art, and STEM). Teen City is free.
 - Each site registers 40-100+ per school year.
- **Summer Camps (full-day, week long):**
 - Play camp: neighborhood-based, offered at ten parks for youth entering 1st-6th grade
 - Rec 'Em: based out of Fort Boise Community Center for youth in grades 1st-3rd and 4-6th (offered in those sections)
 - Mountain Discovery: based out of Fort Boise Community Center/Bogus for youth in grades 3rd-6th and 7th-9th (offered in those sections)
 - Out & About: based out of Fort Boise Community Center for youth in grades 7th-9th





- Teen Activity Center (TAC) at Fort Boise Community Center: free drop-in space for ages 12-17 (7th-12th grade) during the school year (3-6pm, days vary on staffing).
- Youth Employment Program (YEP) - grades 9th-12th. Offers workforce training and paid work experience, transportation offered. Currently supplemented by an ION/Workforce Development grant. Minimal city funds support.
- Adaptive Recreation program - serving children and adults with disabilities
- Art programs
 - Art Center: Located in Fort Boise Community Center. Offers drop-in programming and many classes for youth ages 3+. Adult classes are offered to ages 15+. Fee based; scholarships offered.
 - Art classes offered for free at many elementary programs during the school day. Also offered for free at neighborhood-based community centers, play camps, and afterschool programs.
 - Community Centers: Morley Nelson, Whittier, and Whitney Community Centers feature dedicated art closets equipped with pottery kilns and art supplies.
- Aquatics – youth can access city pools, swim team, lessons, teen pool nights, and adaptive pool night. Fees required, but scholarships offered.
- Open Gyms
 - Fort Boise Community Center Teen Open Gym – Ages 12+, free, M-F, 3-5pm daily.
 - Community Open Gyms - Free, staffed by Parks & Recreation, 3-4 locations in school gyms, ran January-March on weekends. Note: gym-based programs depend on the availability of school gyms and agreement with the school district.



BOISE POLICE DEPARTMENT

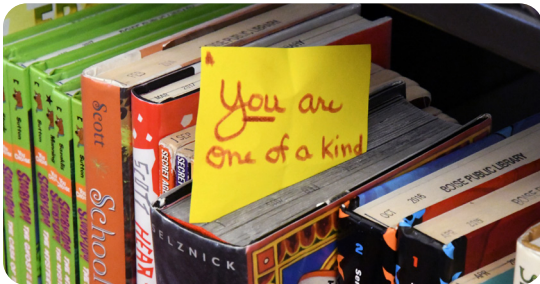
The **BOISE POLICE DEPARTMENT** is made up of approximately 400 employees (300 sworn police officers and civilian support staff of about 100) dedicated to providing the highest quality public safety and law enforcement services with a focus on safety, service, and leadership.

- **SHIELD Academy** - A summer youth program (ages 12–15) run by School Resource Officers and Community Outreach staff. Students participate in leadership activities, team building, field trips, and service projects.
- **Boise Police Activities League (PAL)** - Boise PAL is a 501(3)c not-for-profit organization that operates with a Board comprised of sworn officers and civilians that connects officers and youth through sports, recreation, outdoor adventures, and educational events.
- **Shop With a Cop** - A back-to-school and holiday program pairing officers with youth for supportive shopping trips that provide essential clothing or school supplies while building positive relationships.
- **Cone With a Cop** - A youth-focused outreach event where children and teens meet officers over snow cones in a relaxed environment, helping build trust and positive interaction.
- **National Night Out** - An annual community safety event where officers visit local neighborhoods. Youth can meet officers, explore police vehicles, learn safety tips, and participate in family-friendly activities.
- **All-Abilities Welcome Events** - Inclusive outreach events designed for youth with disabilities, offering calm, supportive settings and sensory-friendly interactions with officers.
- **School Resource Officer (SRO) Program** - Sworn BPD officers assigned to local schools to foster safety, mentorship, and education. SROs teach classes, assist with problem-solving, and support students and staff through daily engagement.
- **Walk to School Day** - A national event where Boise PD partners with schools to walk with students, promote pedestrian safety, reinforce safe-route practices, and build positive officer-student relationships.
- **Bike to School Day** - A spring safety event where officers help students bike to school, teach helmet and traffic safety, and encourage healthy, active transportation.
- **Idaho Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired Summer Camp** - BPD officers take part in the youth summer camp by engaging with children and teens who are blind or visually impaired.

BOISE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The mission of the **BOISE PUBLIC LIBRARY** (BPL) is to provide access and opportunity for everyone by connecting people to ideas, information, and community. BPL's five locations provide Boise's youth with access to materials, technology and programming tailored for interests from ages 0-25. Library programs and events are always free and focus on making sure every child who starts kindergarten is ready to read, keeping school age kids at grade level at every stage, and helping teens build community and prepare for future learning and career opportunities.

- Five Library locations throughout Boise with dedicated space for youth materials and programming at every location
- Programming for ages 0-25 - typically 50+ participants per baby/toddler program (ages 0-5) and 20+ participants per older youth / adult program
- Summer Reading Program for all ages (May-July) with community prizes and activities
- Boise Comic Arts Festival with a connected Emerging Artists Teen Mentorship program
- Multiple story time programs for young children
- After-school offerings for school-aged kids
- Teen events and programs
- Weekend events for all ages
- Summer Reading & Learning Celebration with community partners
- Dozens of community partnerships



BOISE URBAN GARDEN SCHOOL (BUGS)

The **BOISE URBAN GARDEN SCHOOL** is a local garden-based education nonprofit serving approximately 10,000 youth annually through outdoor pre-school, on-site field trips, in-school outreach lessons, and culinary and garden camps. The values of education, sustainability, connection, and curiosity are integral to their mission.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ acre garden as foundation for learning
- Nine Week Summer Culinary camp - for ages 9-14
- Two Weeks of Advanced Culinary Camp - for ages 13-18
- Eleven Weeks of Environmental Garden Camp – weeks vary in ages from preschool up to age 14
- Youth cooking classes and family-oriented cooking classes – teaching foundational, empowering skills using produce from BUGS garden
- Adult education programs
- After-school, in-school culinary clubs for kids
- Community events – including STEM/STEAM nights
- Small apiary with bees for education, pollination and honey production
- Hands-on experiential learning including in-school lessons and field trips focusing on STEAM/environment/health





BOISE WATERSHED

THE WATERSHED is an environmental/science education center co-located at the West Boise Water Renewal Facility serving the community since 2008. They serve more than 22,000 children, teens, and adults through exhibits, programs and climate action initiatives. Their mission is to increase water and climate change awareness and inspire action by teaching people of all ages how to protect and conserve our precious natural resources for future generations.

- More than 25 interactive exhibits in the exhibit hall with 2 acres of hands-on activities and water features (free admission and parking)
- Youth Watershed Action Team - paid summer internship positions (10-12 interns) for young individuals committed to educating about water and climate
- Youth Climate Action Council - see below
- Teen Environmental Education offerings for ages 13-17 available through Boise Environmental Education partnership
- Programs for schools and families throughout the year (most programs are free)
- Features largest concentration of public art in Idaho

ENERGIZE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

ENERGIZE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS is a City of Boise program supporting neighborhood associations and community engagement initiatives. They partner with the 35 established neighborhood associations to enrich the lives of residents, enhance neighborhood identity, and encourage a strong sense of community.

- Placemaking and community activation programs that are beginning to engage youth in neighborhood improvement projects
- Neighborhood Investment Program - funding for community projects that benefit youth (i.e. skate spot, traffic garden, pathways, etc.).
- Boise Neighborhood Interactive annual conference for community engagement and leadership development



Passage by James Peterson





YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION COUNCIL

The **YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION COUNCIL** is an application-based youth committee that invites youth voices around the Treasure Valley to imagine, strategize, and implement climate action projects and summits with support from city staff. Their projects and events raise awareness and engage Boiseans in environmental advocacy and climate action initiatives and solutions.

- Over 50 students have served as council members since 2020
- 200 students attend the annual Youth Climate Summit
- Featured in The New York Times article “The Rise of Youth Climate Councils”



ZOO BOISE

ZOO BOISE is a City-owned zoo with a nonprofit organization assisting with providing educational programming, career exploration, and conservation education for youth of all ages.

- School field trips – Grades K-college
- Summer camps - for various ages
- Zoo Teen summer career program - applications December 1-January 31 for teens aged 12-17 to participate in service learning
- Volunteer opportunities for children with guardian supervision
- Community service opportunities for juvenile diversion referrals
- Stroller Safari program - for toddlers and parents with multi-sensory activities
- Homeschool Zoo program series - classroom discussion, lab activities, animal encounters for home-schooled students aligned with Idaho State Science Standards
- Specific age-targeted programs: Preschool programs (ages 3-5), various summer camps by age group
- Spring Break Day Camps - for grades 2-6
- Adaptive programs



YOUTH ROADMAP

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

This list includes relevant organizations and programs that participated in the Youth Roadmap research process or emerged through our research. This list is not exhaustive; Boise has a rich landscape of youth-serving organizations, programs, and resources, and organizations not mentioned here are not less valuable or less important to the community.

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

- Ada County 4-H
- Agency for New Americans (ANA)
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Idaho
- Boise Art Museum
- Boise Bicycle Project (BBP)
- Boise Contemporary Theater
- Boise Hive
- Boise Rock School
- Boise School District Athletics & Clubs
- Boise Skateboard Association
- Boise Public Schools Foundation
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Ada County
- Cathedral of the Rockies
- Challenged Athletes Foundation
- City of Good
- Clarvida Youth Support Center
- Communities for Youth (C4Y)
- Discovery Center of Idaho
- Girl Scouts of Silver Sage
- Idaho Botanical Garden
- Idaho Coalition for Community Schools
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Idaho Education News
- Idaho Humane Society
- Idaho Out-of-School Network (ION)
- Idaho Public Television
- Idaho STEM Action Center
- Idaho Youth Ranch
- Idaho Youth Sports Commission
- J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation (JKAF)
- Saint Alphonsus
- Special Olympics Idaho
- St. Luke's
- The Bridge (Ada County Juvenile Services)
- The Community Center - Youth Alliance for Diversity (YAD)
- Treasure Valley Institute for Children's Arts (TRICA)
- Treefort / Duck Club
- United Way of Treasure Valley
- YMCA of Treasure Valley
- Youth Mental Wellness Alliance



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