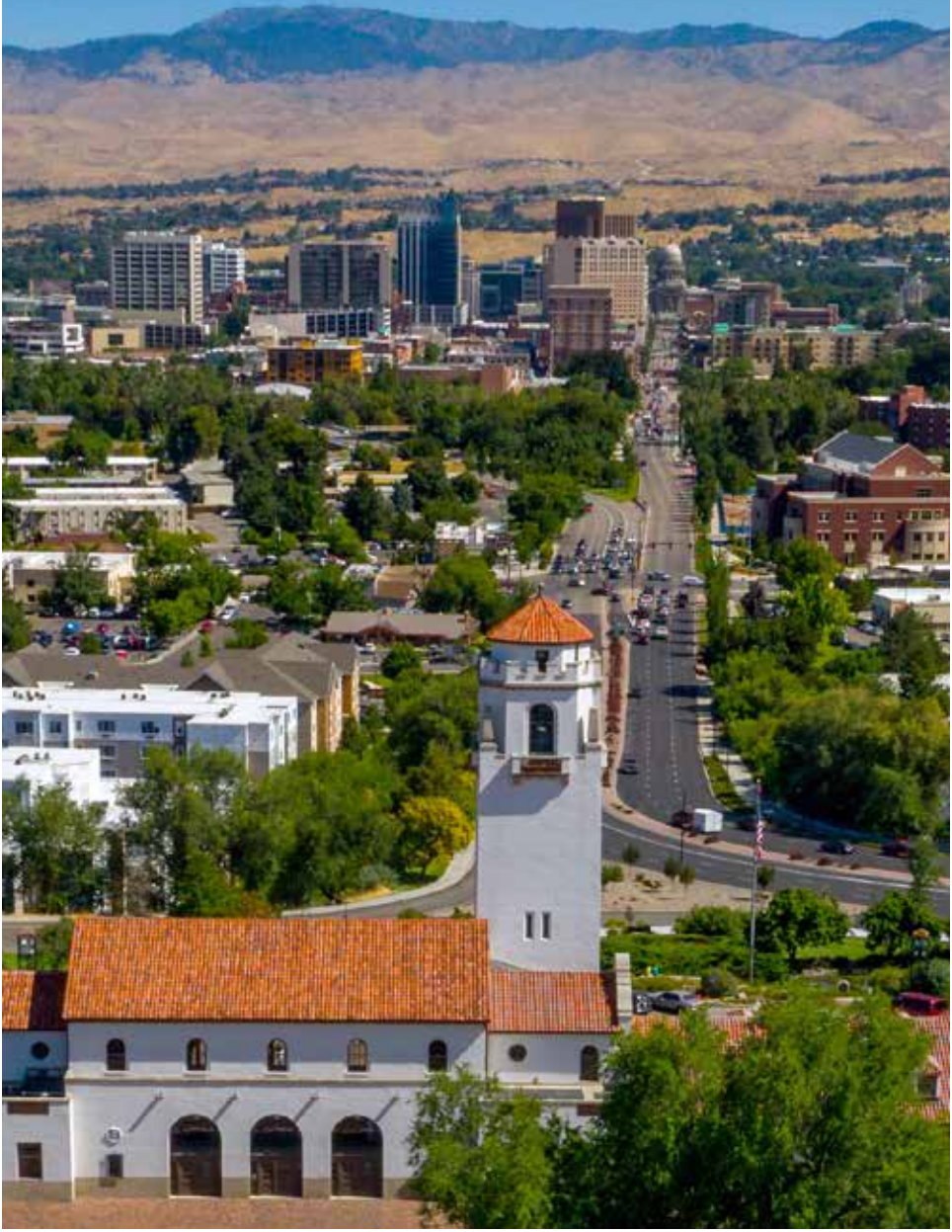
CITY OF BOISE

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SERIES ONE REPORT 2018

Dr. Jen Schneider, Boise State University



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report analyzes results from three large community workshops on growth conducted by the City of Boise in June 2018. Although the workshops were moderated, residents were openly invited to share their excitement and concerns about growth in the city and a wide range of perspectives was shared.

However, four main themes of concern emerged as most significant from the three conversations:

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

TRANSPORTATION

CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

GOVERNANCE

These themes, which overlap with one another, are briefly described below.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The issue that received the greatest number of overall comments had to do with **housing affordability**. Conversations having to do with the affordability and availability of housing centered around how to care for those who are most vulnerable, how to keep housing affordable for young people and families and the role of "outside" developers and infrastructure development and maintenance.

Closely related to discussions of **housing affordability** were concerns about wage stagnation—wages not keeping pace with the cost of living. Participants also felt that inequities created by wage stagnation were exacerbated by increasing social problems and needs, and the inability of social services to keep pace.

When participants discussed how they wanted to address **housing affordability**, they frequently turned to discussions of smart-growth, a concept that refers to high-density, walkable/bikeable/highly-connected, mixed-use development, with neighborhood business centers and other amenities, such as parks and neighborhoods. Smart-growth tends to be the antithesis of sprawl (especially with regard to **environmental preservation** and **transportation**), and is focused on creating a number of neighborhood "hubs" around the city.

As one participant put it, "We should be thinking about building neighborhoods, not subdivisions." Participants also frequently noted they wanted the City to be focusing on neighborhoods outside of downtown, an issue that touches on another of the four major themes—**governance**. There is a perception that City Hall cares primarily for downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods, and that more investment should be made in neighborhoods outside the core.

TRANSPORTATION

Another issue that received a great deal of attention was **transportation**. In particular, participants frequently mentioned that they would like the City to explore the idea of building a lightrail; they wanted to see the frequency, quality, and affordability of existing public transportation—especially the bus system—to improve; and they were increasingly concerned about long commute times as residents who work in Boise moved from Boise to surrounding areas in the Valley. North-South accessibility across the city also emerged as a theme of concern; traffic congestion was noted as one issue that is making the city seem less "livable."

Transportation is closely connected, therefore, to the issue of **housing affordability**. Those who want to see more smart-growth would also like to see improvements in public and mass transportation. Those concerned with **preservation** may have also noted increasing problems with traffic and parking, while those worried about **governance** issues focused on the challenges of managing transportation issues when the City must contend with state (ITD) and county (ACHD) authorities.

Transportation issues also have overlaps with concerns about **environmental preservation**—because of air quality concerns—and with the ease of moving about downtown and between neighborhoods, which has to do with **socio-cultural preservation**.

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Those who wanted to see more smart-growth in Boise frequently mentioned NIMBY ("Not in My Backyard") arguments as blocking opportunities for smart development.

However, those who might be accused of NIMBY-ism could also be seen as primarily concerned with **socio-cultural preservation**, and not just self-preservation. These participants were predominantly interested in the preservation of historic neighborhoods, the character of the city, and the rapid pace of change. They mentioned the importance of maintaining the "Boise way of life"—big city opportunities with a small-town feel. Preservationists do not necessarily oppose development or growth, but they do oppose it in particular areas, in particular forms and without adequate consultation. For those interested in **socio-cultural preservation**, the lack of adequate and collaborative **governance** is therefore also a major issue.

Socio-cultural preservation can therefore be understood as the desire to focus on the quality of life in particular neighborhoods, maintenance of a small-town feel and the preservation of historic and aesthetic norms and attitudes.

In addition to some of the cultural attributes that contribute to "Boise"-ness, participants also identified what they saw as "core" geographic or environmental attributes. Many of these also came up during the discussions of what people appreciated about life in Boise.

Environmental preservation, therefore, has to do with the protection of existing natural amenities and with environmental quality. In particular, participants noted the importance of being able to access the Greenbelt and the Foothills easily. But they are also concerned that these environmental amenities are being "loved to death," and that more must be done to protect and care for them. Air quality was also mentioned frequently as a concern, particularly in relation to growing traffic in the Valley.

GOVERNANCE

Governance in this context could be defined as how we make decisions about our shared political and cultural lives. As should be clear by now, **governance** is a theme that cuts across many of the other areas of concern. Participants in the workshops felt that the City could improve in the areas of communication, transparency, education and participation when it comes to decision-making. Participants did not feel that the City was listening to them enough. Instead, there was a general sense that at the City, "money talks," meaning that planning documents and even planning and zoning could be circumvented if the project was seen as desirable or lucrative enough.

Above all, residents want to make sure that planning is done collaboratively and that it is meaningful. Some perceive Blueprint Boise as "lacking teeth," meaning that it is not always enforced, that it is opportunistically circumvented at times, and that it is not aligned with planning and zoning.

A relatively large number of participants also noted that they wanted the City to push back against the State Legislature when it comes to having the option to levy local taxes.

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 2018, the City of Boise conducted its biennial citizen survey. Survey results suggested that many citizens were preoccupied with growth; at the same time, an increasing number of national media outlets such as *Forbes Magazine* were increasingly reporting on Boise's rapid population growth[1]. Growth, and its consequences, were clearly on the mind of Boise residents and city government officials. As a result, the Office of Community Engagement in the Mayor's office embarked on a series of community engagement efforts aimed at fostering community conversations on growth, which would in turn inform future planning efforts.

First, in May 2018, the City organized two small focus groups on the topic of growth. One focus group included participants who had lived in Boise for less than five years, and the other for more than fifteen. Findings from that report suggest that residents were concerned about housing affordability, transportation and decision-making processes around development. The process and results from these focus groups were used to plan the community workshops described below.

Second, in June 2018, the City sponsored three "Community Workshops"—facilitated discussion sessions on the topic of growth in Boise. Using the questions piloted in the May focus groups, three large groups of residents met to talk to one another about what they valued about life in Boise, and what their main concerns for growth are. This report presents and analyzes the results of those workshops.

The Mayor's office plans to hold additional community meetings in Fall 2018 that specifically address the four main issues of concern that arose during the first round of focus groups and workshops: housing affordability, transportation, governance, and environmental and cultural preservation.

1 Sharf, Samantha. "Full list: America's fastest-growing cities 2018." *Forbes Magazine*. 28 February 2018. https://www.forbes.com/sites/samanthasharf/2018/02/28/full-list-americas-fastest-growing-cities-2018/#5e08aa167feb. Accessed July 22, 2018.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS ON GROWTH

The three community workshops held in June were sponsored by the Mayor's office. The workshops were moderated by Dr. Jen Schneider, professor in the School of Public Service at Boise State University, and were loosely based on the World Café model. This meant that participants were seated at tables with trained facilitators who guided them through a series of questions about their perspectives on the City and growth.

These comments were recorded on paper by table facilitators. Tables would periodically report back to the room, and these comments were also recorded on large pieces of paper hung in the room. At the end of the session, individuals were invited to "vote" on the areas they were most concerned about using sticky dots.

Table facilitators were city employees who were trained before the event. Their focus was not to serve as spokespeople for the City, but to encourage lively, civil discussion and to record participant conversation.

Invitations to the first two workshops were publicized to the community at large through media and social media outlets, and were also sent to various groups that have an interest in the issue of growth, including neighborhood associations and the Chamber of Commerce. Interest was immediate and enthusiastic, leading the City to add a third workshop, which also filled quickly. The attrition rate for the three meetings was around 30%, meaning that around 1/3 of the residents who RSVP'd did not end up attending the meetings. Waitlists were created for each meeting, and those on waitlists were all admitted to the meetings. In other words, those who wanted to attend, could. There were also a handful of walk-ins at sessions 2 and 3, which brings the number of attendees up slightly for those two sessions.

An online feedback portal was also created, so that those who could not attend the meetings could still provide their feedback. The online portal was open from June 20-June 28 and garnered 176 additional responses. The results from that forum are presented separately in this report.

	DATE	LOCATION	# OF ATTENDEES
WORKSHOP #1	June 20	St. Alphonsus McCleary Auditorium	56
WORKSHOP #2	June 26	Boise State University Alumni and Friends Center	67
WORKSHOP #3	June 28	Boise State University Student Union Building—Lookout Room	68
ONLINE WORKSHOP	June 20-June 28		176

The locations that were chosen were available on the dates needed; had accessible parking; were not all located downtown (the planning team wanted some geographic diversity); had venues large enough to seat more than 100 people at round tables; and offered catering services (food was provided to participants because the events took place during the dinner hour).

The community workshops were scheduled for two hours, from 6-8pm, on each of the dates listed. Roughly speaking, the following outline was followed for each meeting:

- Introductory remarks by Mayor Bieter and City Councilmember Clegg or McLean
- Review of the discussion process
- Introductions at tables
- Determining guidelines for productive discussion at tables
- First round of table discussion: What do you appreciate about Boise? What do you want to preserve? Are there things that excite you about growth?
- Large-group report-out
- Second round of table discussion (longest period): What most concerns you about growth?
- Large-group report-out
- Feedback cards
- Group voting using sticky dots

Participants were asked first about what they valued about life in Boise, and what they most wanted to preserve. Event planners felt that this was an important starting place, because many of our concerns as residents about growth have to do with what may be lost as growth occurs. This discussion also permitted participants to get to know one another and build some trust before discussing concerns.

The bulk of discussion time was devoted to participants discussing their concerns about growth. Hundreds of comments were recorded by table facilitators, and varied widely. However, three main themes emerged as areas of greatest concern. Those are presented and analyzed below.

Records of all notes taken, including sticky dot voting and feedback cards submitted by participants, are available online at https://www.livboise.org/initiatives/community-conversation-on-growth/. Feedback from the online session is also available at this website. The results from the online session are presented separately below. A copy of this report will also be made available at that website.

METHODOLOGY

Table facilitators recorded in writing the conversations at each table, and notes of the large-group report-outs were also taken, both by a graphic recorder and by facilitators. Digital pictures were taken of all notes, and the notes were then transcribed into Word documents.

For the lists of words communicating the things residents appreciated about Boise, or looked forward to with growth, Dr. Schneider took the transcripts and made responses more uniform so that they were more consistent and could be aggregated. For example, whenever a specific park was mentioned, that individual park name was counted under the general category "parks," and then the total number of time "parks" was mentioned was aggregated and counted. Results are presented in descending order in Appendix 1 and are discussed below.

For the notes regarding resident concerns, a different approach was needed. Dr. Schneider took the transcripts for the "concerns" conversations and began coding all notes by labeling them with themes, preserving when possible the words of participants. For example, the word "transportation" appeared on the notes from many table conversations across the three meetings. But there were also more specific comments about transportation—such as "Boise needs more bike lanes," which were recorded as a subcategory under the "transportation heading." Themes and their related sub-themes were thus grouped together.

Comments that appeared more than once were counted, in order to give a sense of the frequency of particular words or comments. The results of sticky dot voting were also compiled and are presented in table form. The top themes of concern to emerge from sticky dot voting were also those that emerged from the analysis of the table discussions.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

It should be noted that participants attending the first workshop were given six dots to vote—3 green dots to place on items that excited them about growth, and 3 to mark their concern. This led to much confusion, and at the following two meetings, each resident had three dots to vote on their main areas of concern only. This means that the results of sticky dot voting should be viewed with interest, but not scientifically—the first group had more votes, and voted differently, than the second two groups. Still, the themes that emerged from the exercise mirror those that emerged from the analysis of the transcripts, and if anything, provide support for the analysis presented here.

For the most part, comments were clearly written down and easily coded (for example, "affordable housing" appeared with great frequency in exactly that form). However, not all comments were easily interpreted or legible; when this occurred, Dr. Schneider made good-faith efforts, based on the surrounding transcribed comments and her observation of the conversations at the events, to capture what she thought the spirit of the message was. In such cases, approximations will have to suffice.

It is also probable that not all participant comments were captured by facilitators; short of taking video or audio recordings, which would have felt

intrusive, we opted in favor of capturing as many resident comments as we could, and on erring on the side of looking for large themes and promoting good conversation.

One additional challenge of coding hundreds of comments from hundreds of citizens, and then grouping into themes, is that many themes bleed into one another, and participants may have seemingly paradoxical or conflicting views.

For example, a participant might feel strongly that affordable housing is a pressing need, and at the same time feel that he does not want a large apartment building constructed near his residence, seemingly without his input, and by a developer from out of state. This same person, however, may feel strongly that growth is an important economic driver for the city, providing jobs and shifting wages upward. He supports mixed-use condominiums being built downtown, with low-income housing for service workers included. It is not easy to say that such a person is either "pro-growth" or "anti-growth."

Such complexity will be something the City and its residents will have to negotiate moving forward. If anything, the results presented here underscore the fact that many growth-related issues are interrelated and must be addressed holistically.

RESULTS

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT BOISE

During the first round of table conversations, residents were asked questions such as, "What do you like most about living in Boise?" and, "When you talk to someone not from here about what Boise is like, what do you say," and "What are your best memories of living here?"

These lists of activities, characteristics and places were turned into the list of categories below. Only those attributes that were listed 20 or more times are presented here; for a complete list of categories and the frequency they were mentioned, see Appendix 1.

1. **Outdoor activities and recreation** (boating, hiking, golf, etc.) (51)
2. **Friendly** (hospitable, welcoming, nice, kind) (51)
3. **Accessible** (42)
4. **Arts** (Public art, museums) (37)
5. **Environment** (nature, outdoors) (37)
6. **Vibrant downtown** (32)
7. **Parks** (31)
8. **Small-town feel** (livability, ease) (30)
9. **Bikeable** (28)
10. **Community** (connected) (27)
11. **Diversity** (27)
12. **Events** (concerts, festivals) (29)
13. **Greenbelt** (25)
14. **Neighborhoods** (24)
15. **Safe** (24)
16. **Foothills** (and trails) (23)
17. **River** (22)
18. **Universities** (22)

These categories may be further grouped into three broad areas: socio-cultural characteristics, natural amenities and socio-cultural amenities.

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS	NATURAL AMENITIES	SOCIO-CULTURAL AMENITIES
Friendly (51)	Outdoor activities (51)	Arts (37)
Accessible (42)	Environment (37)	Vibrant downtown (32)
Small-town feel (3)	Parks (31)	Events (29)
Bikeable (28)	Greenbelt (25)	Universities (22)
Community (27)	Foothills (23)	
Diversity (27)	River (22)	
Neighborhoods (24)		
Safe (24)		
TOTAL: 226	**TOTAL: 189**	**TOTAL: 120**

As this list indicates, participants particularly valued a sense of **accessibility** overall—this could be said to be a cross-cutting theme across these three categories. Accessibility meant a variety of things:

1) the city's "small-town feel"—the friendliness of residents, the sense of community, the quality of neighborhoods, the ability to access one's government officials and the overall ease of life here.

2) the ability to easily access natural amenities, such as parks, trails and the river, without too much hassle or over-crowding. Participants noted again and again that stunning outdoor landscapes were often just a short drive away, and that the city is both bikeable and walkable, at least in some neighborhoods.

3) the ability to easily and affordably attend a number of events, including cultural and artistic events. Downtown was characterized most frequently as "vibrant" in this regard, and universities were mentioned as a positive contributor to the city's vitality. Participants appreciate the diversity of residents and events, and are looking forward to more diversity to come.

WHAT CONCERNS US ABOUT GROWTH

The conversations about growth were wide-ranging and often complex, but overall, four main themes emerged:

1) the affordability of housing

2) transportation

3) environmental and cultural preservation

4) governance

As was noted above, these themes were often treated as inter-connected, and a number of sub-themes emerged under each of these general areas that contained complex or contradictory concerns or visions for the future. It may be most helpful to think about these concerns as overlapping, with concerns about whether the city will remain "livable," and for whom, at the center.

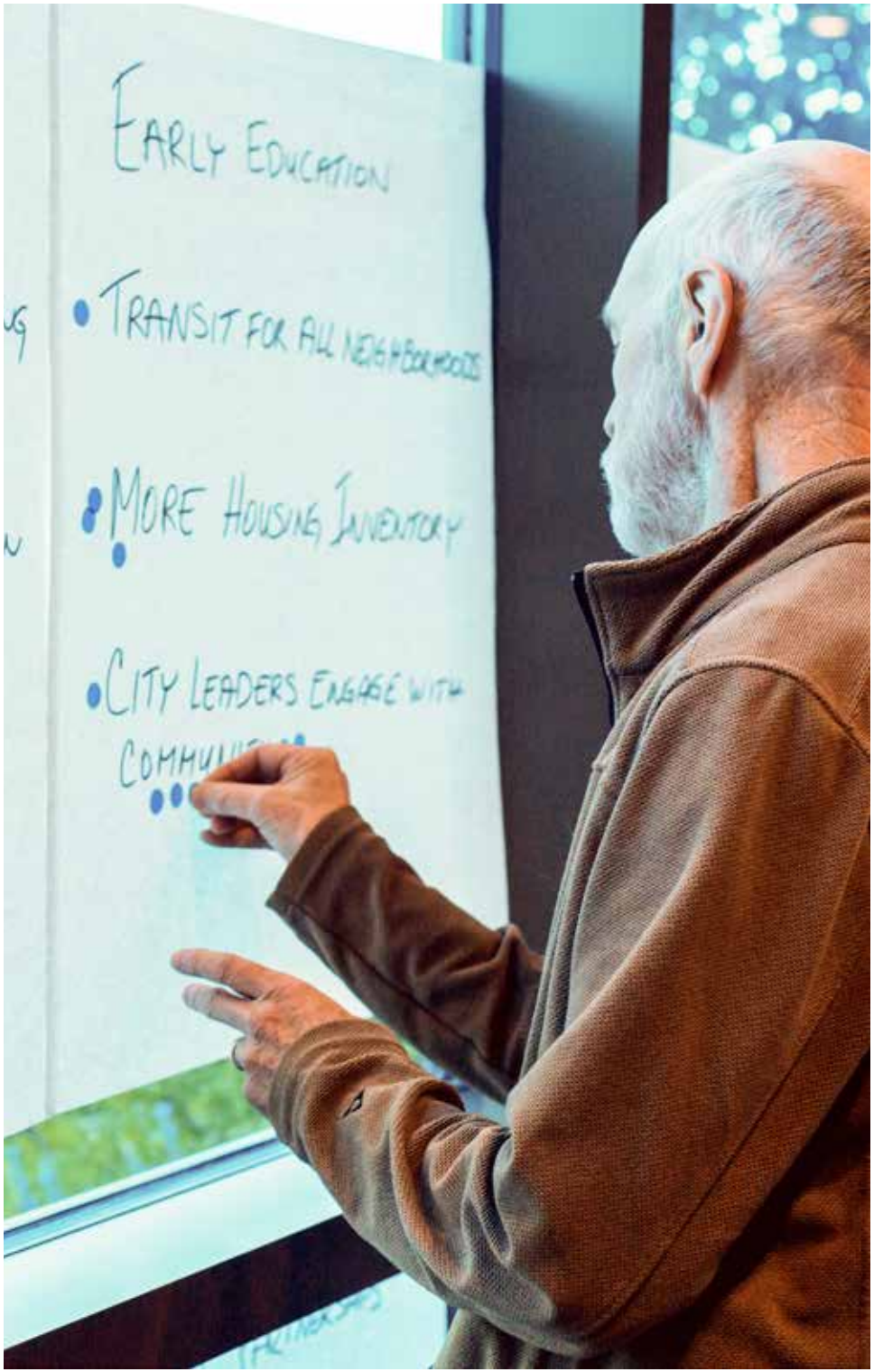
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The two issues that received the greatest number of overall comments had to do with **housing affordability** and **transportation**. Conversations having to do with the affordability and availability of housing centered around how to care for those who are most vulnerable, how to keep housing affordable for young people and families and the role of "outside" developers and infrastructure development and maintenance.

The number of themes having to do with housing are presented below:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING THEMES

THEME	# OF TIMES MENTIONED
Affordable housing (general mentions)	36
Concern for vulnerable who can't afford housing	42
Developer behaviors	51
Housing stock	35
Displacement	26
Barriers to building	11
Wage stagnation	35
Inadequate social services	83
Smart-growth	102
TOTAL	**421**



These themes can be further broken down into sub-themes:

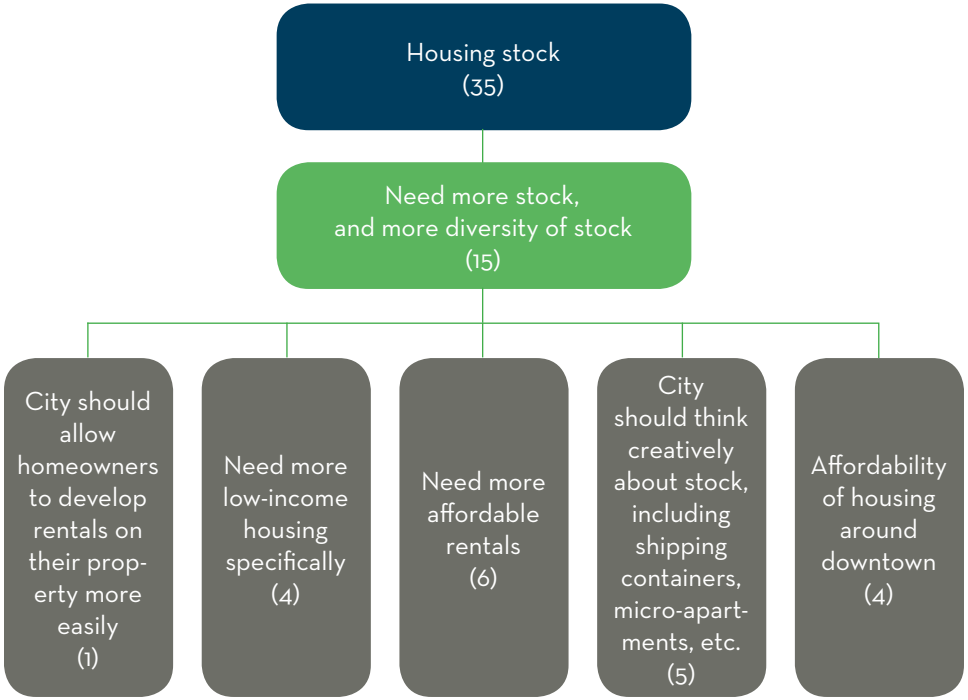
HOW TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE VULNERABLE OR STRUGGLING:

- How to assist those who are most vulnerable or disadvantaged? (42)
  - General concern for vulnerable (3)
  - First-time home buyers and young families (10)
  - Those on a fixed income, such as elderly and the disabled (6)
  - Those in service industries (5)
  - Renters: "If I'm priced out, where will I go?" (11)
  - The homeless (7)

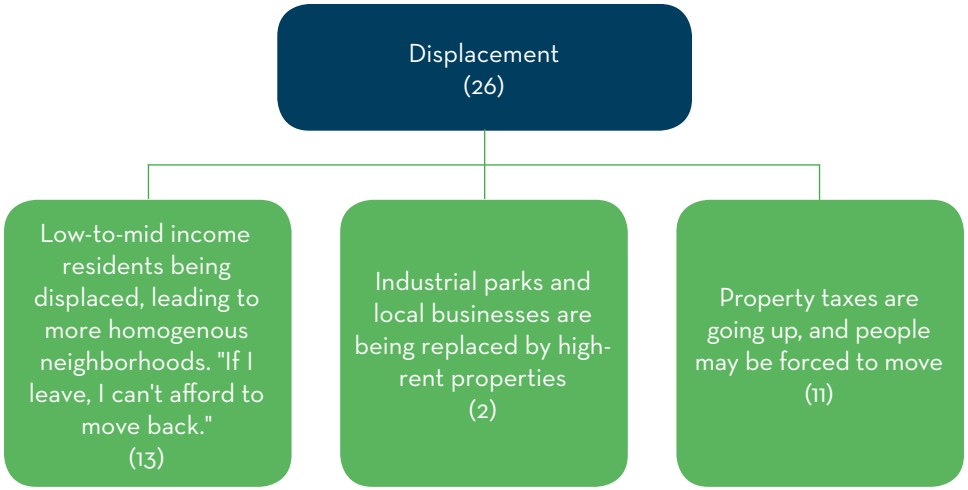
DEVELOPER BEHAVIORS:

- Problems with developers (51)
  - Out-of-state developers, with cash, are flipping properties (12)
  - They are often focused on profit, not always on quality building (2)
  - Infrastructure is not always keeping up with development, and developers aren't contributing, or coordinating with the City (34)
  - But the City must protect private property rights (3)

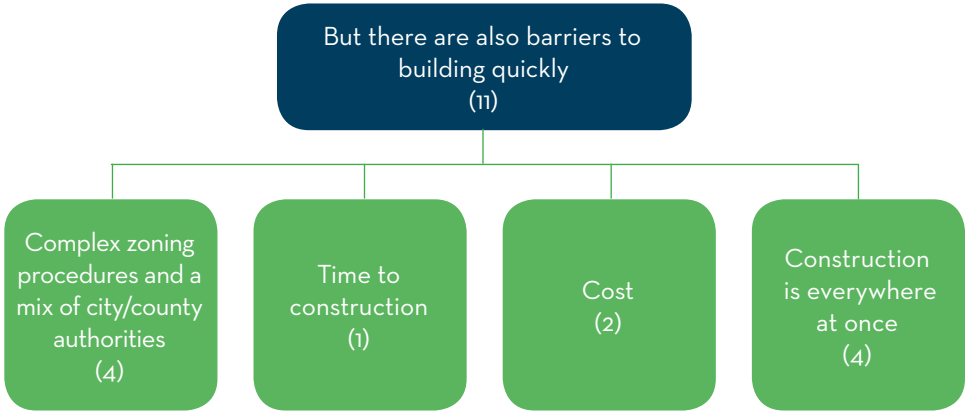
HOUSING STOCK:



CONCERNS ABOUT DISPLACEMENT:



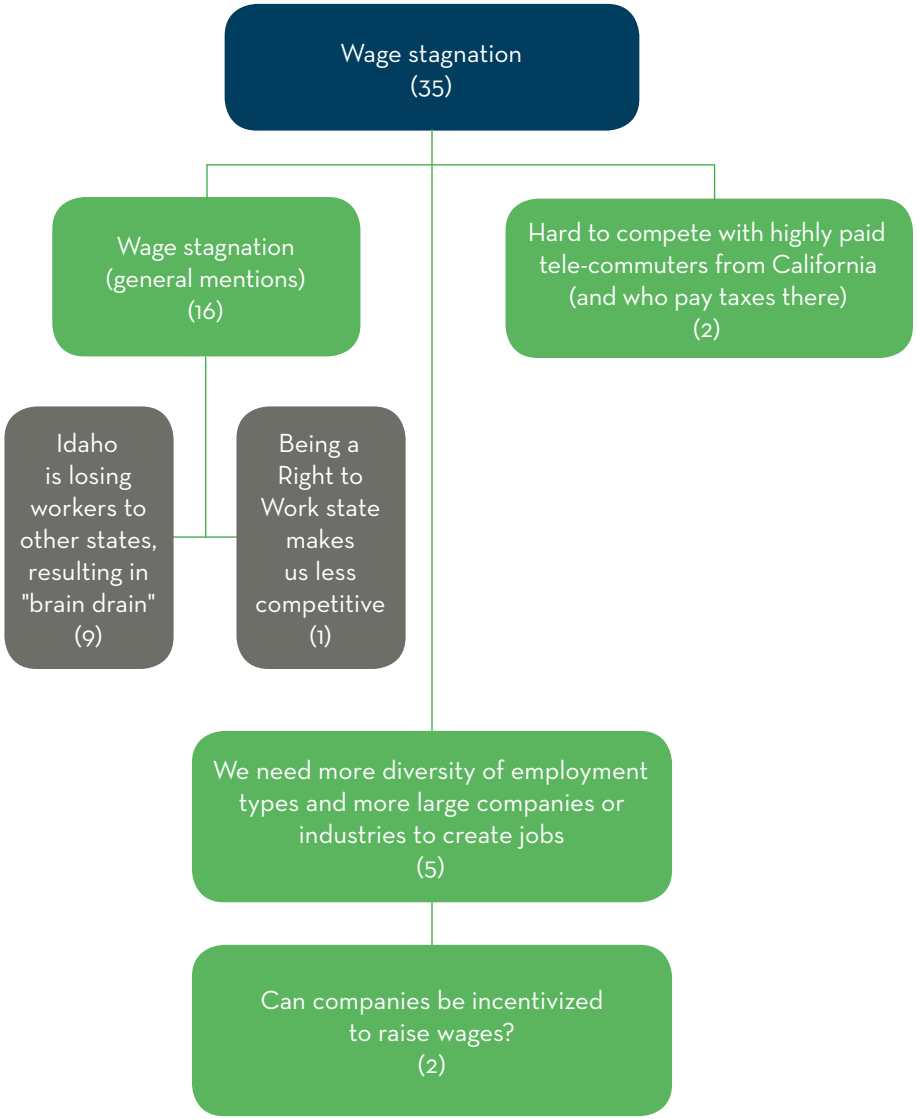
PRACTICAL BARRIERS TO CONSTRUCTION:



Housing conversations also touched on related issues: wage stagnation; access to social services and education; how to "grow smart,"; and how to respect the cultures of existing neighborhoods (which overlaps with the "**socio-cultural preservation**" theme).

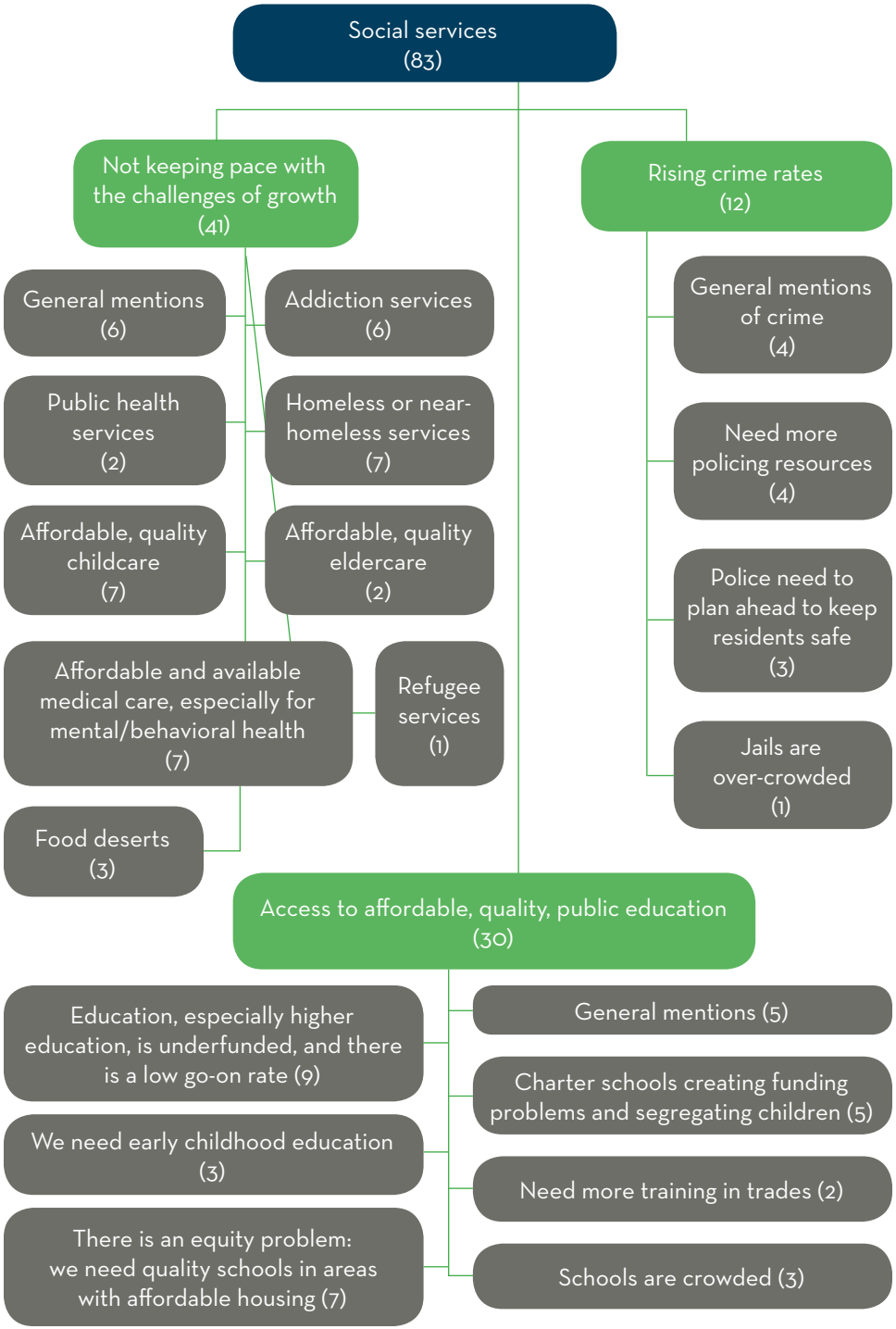
Closely related to discussions of housing affordability were concerns about wage stagnation—wages not keeping pace with the cost of living.

WAGE STAGNATION:



Participants also felt that inequities created by wage stagnation were exacerbated by increasing social problems and needs, and the inability of social services to keep pace.

INADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES:



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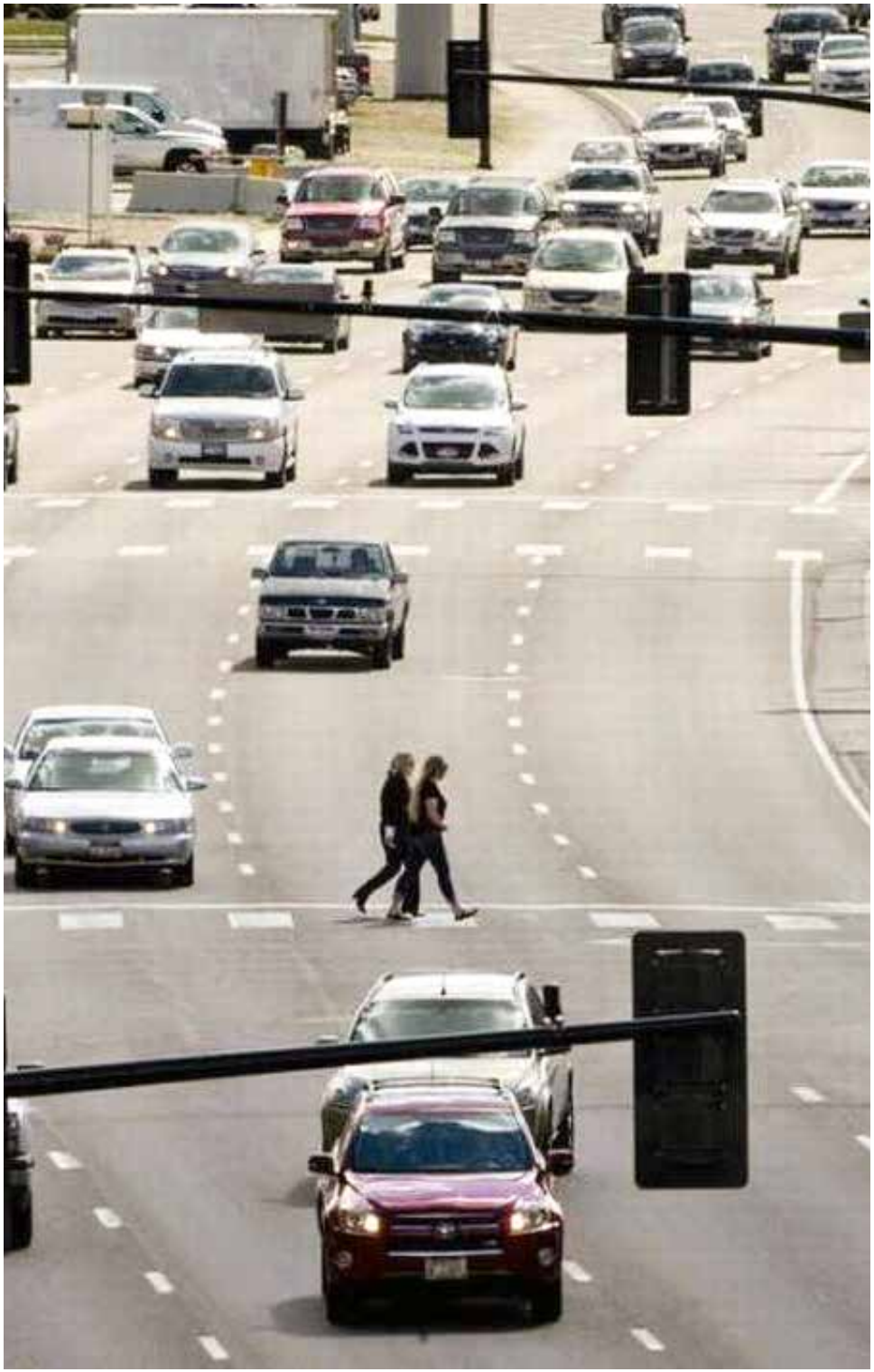
Smart-growth tends to be the antithesis of sprawl (especially with regard to **environmental preservation** and **transportation**). Participants also mentioned the importance of creating a number of neighborhood "hubs" around the city, so that residents could access parks, restaurants, businesses, libraries and grocery stores near where they lived.

As one participant put it, "We should be thinking about building neighborhoods, not subdivisions." Participants also frequently noted they wanted the City to be focusing on neighborhoods outside of downtown, an issue that touches on another major theme—**governance**.

SMART-GROWTH:

Below are the aggregate results from "sticky dot" voting—based on the topics that were shared out by each table to the room at large and recorded, event participants could then "vote" by affixing sticky dots to topics they were concerned about. This gives a general sense of which topics are top-of-mind for residents.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF DOTS
Affordable Housing	64
Wages not equal to the cost of living; income disparities	30
NIMBY – Opposition to affordable housing/density	15
More Housing Inventory	15
Quality of development: livability, building standards, impact fees	13
Infrastructure not keeping pace with growth	12
Access to health care and other social services (homelessness, elder care, low-income, childcare)	11
Undue influence from outsiders, especially developers (+public funding for private projects)	9
Need more diverse development/housing	7
Property values	2
Loss of young talent ("brain drain")	1
TOTAL	**179**



TRANSPORTATION

Another issue that received a great deal of attention was **transportation**. In particular, participants frequently mentioned that they would like the City to explore the idea of building a lightrail; they wanted to see the frequency, quality and affordability of existing public transportation—especially the bus system—improve; and they were increasingly concerned about long commute times as residents who work in Boise moved from Boise to surrounding areas in the Valley. North-South accessibility across the city also emerged as a theme of concern; traffic congestion was noted as one issue that is making the city seem less "livable."

Transportation is closely connected, therefore, to the issue of **housing affordability**. Those who want to see more smart-growth would also like to see improvements in public and mass transportation. Those concerned with **preservation** may have also noted increasing problems with traffic and parking, while those worried about **governance** issues focused on the challenges of managing transportation issues when the City must contend with state (ITD) and county (ACHD) authorities.

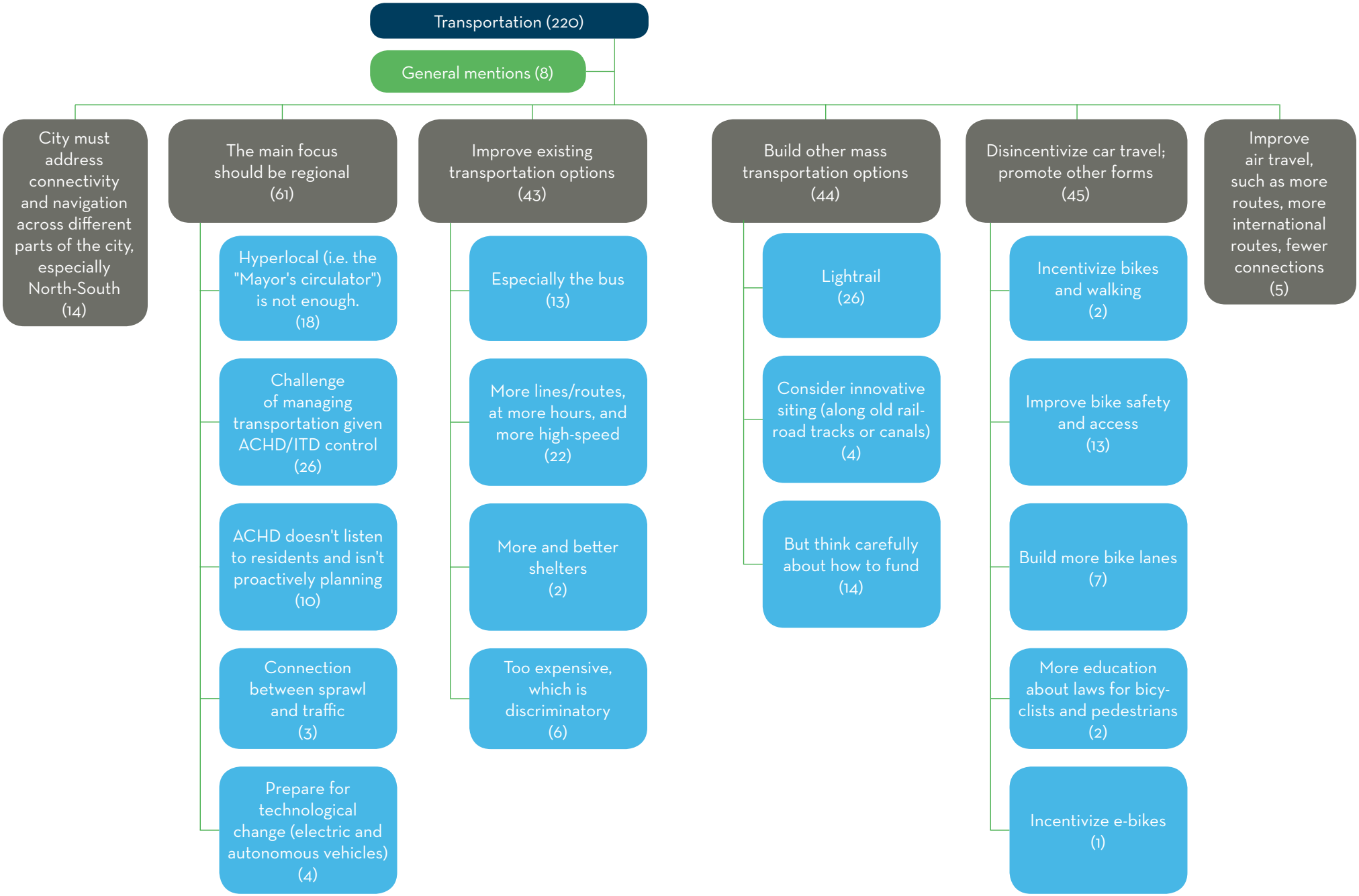
Transportation issues also have overlaps with concerns about **environmental preservation**—because of air quality concerns—and with the ease of moving about downtown and between neighborhoods, which has to do with **socio-cultural preservation**.

TRANSPORTATION THEMES

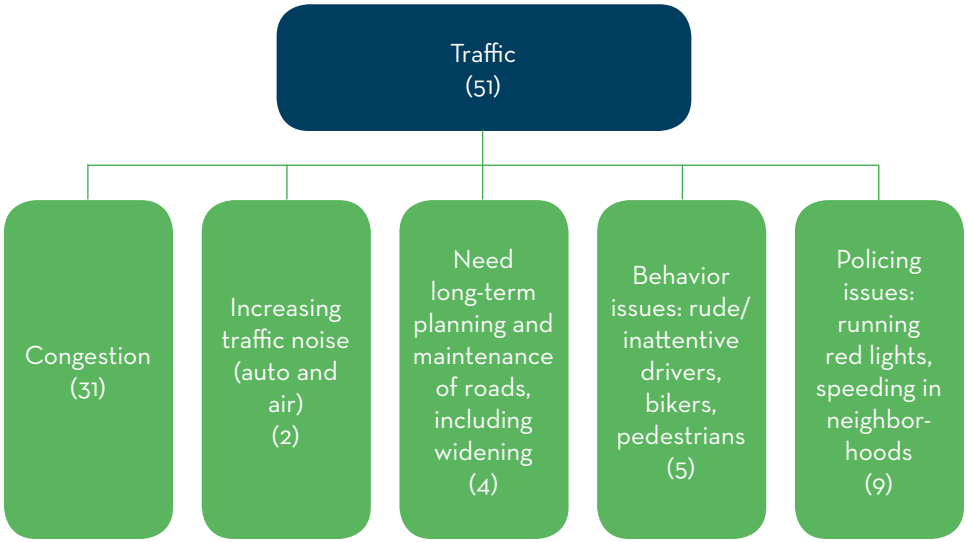
THEME	# OF TIMES MENTIONED
Transportation (general mentions)	8
In-city connectivity and navigation	14
Need for regional planning	61
Improve existing transportation options	43
Build other mass transportation options	44
Disincentivize car travel; incentivize walking and biking	45
Improve air travel options	5
Traffic conditions	51
TOTAL	**271**

Types of transportation were a major concern for many participants, as one can see from the figure at below.

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION:



Traffic congestion also came up as a theme of concern during transportation discussions. As was the case during the focus groups, there is a sense that as traffic and parking conditions worsen, the city becomes less livable.



During sticky dot voting, a great deal of emphasis was placed on developing additional mass transportation options, especially lightrail, but also bikeability and walkability. The emphasis here on "all neighborhoods" also has implications for **governance**. It should be noted that, overall, transportation also received a higher number of sticky dots than did affordable housing (though issues related to housing affordability were mentioned more often). This may reflect some passion on the part of participants to see more public transportation developed.

Also note that mentions of "getting control of streets" probably refers to Ada County's jurisdiction over roads. The item having to do with infrastructure is also included here, as roads were mentioned as an example of infrastructure not keeping pace with development. Again, both have connections to **governance** issues of concern to participants.

TOPIC	# OF DOTS
More public transportation options (lightrail?)/ Transit for all neighborhoods	105
Inter-regional cooperation of transportation issues	35
Increase non-auto connectivity in city (Greenbelt, paths)	20
Getting control of streets (from ACHD/ITD)	15
Infrastructure not keeping pace with growth	12
Education and enforcement of transportation laws	9
Pedestrian access	4
TOTAL	**200**

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Those who wanted to see more smart-growth in Boise frequently mentioned NIMBY ("Not in My Backyard") arguments as blocking opportunities for smart development.

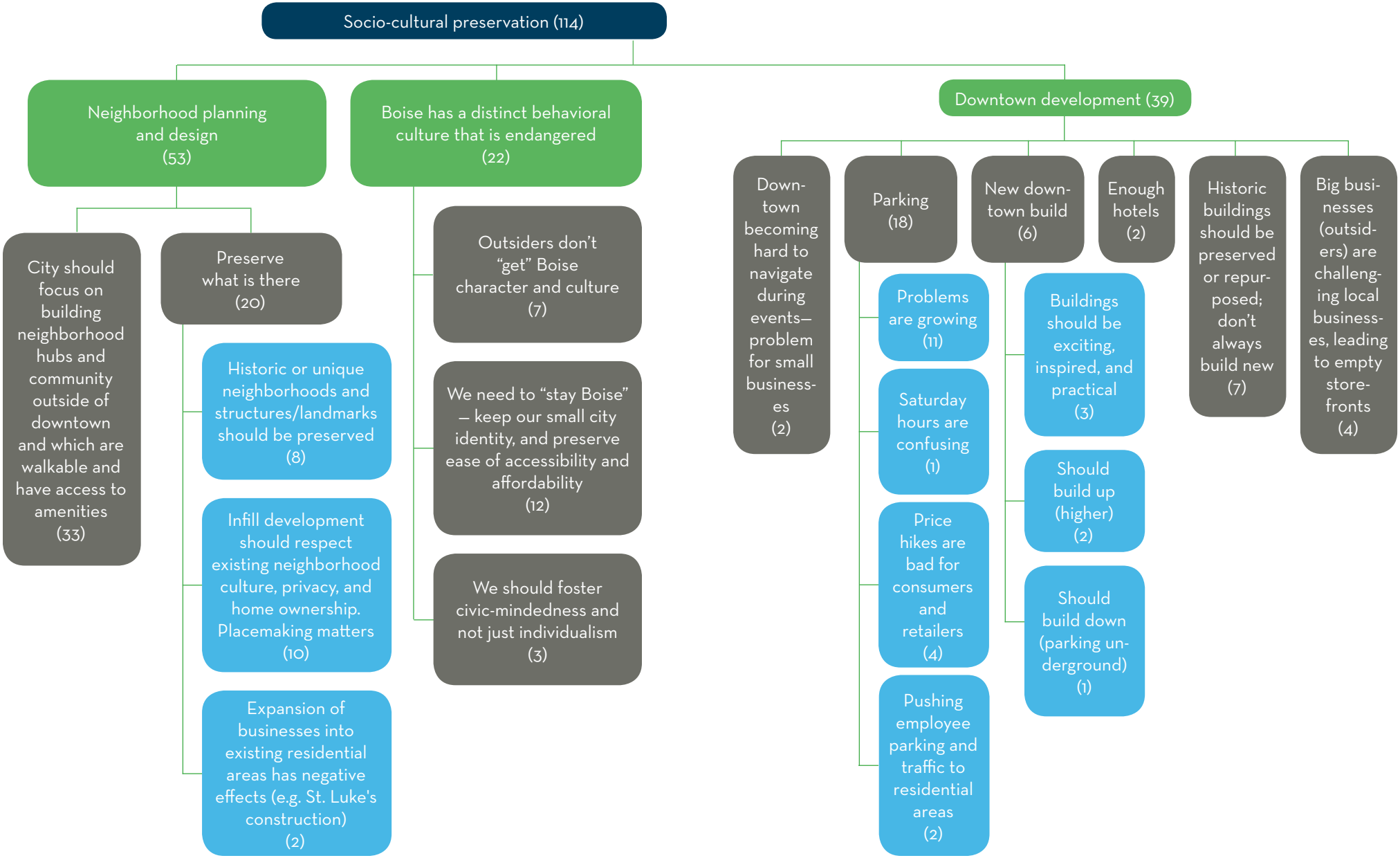
However, those who might be accused of NIMBY-ism could also be seen as primarily concerned with **socio-cultural preservation**, and not just self-preservation. These participants were predominantly interested in the preservation of historic neighborhoods, the character of the city and the rapid pace of change. They mentioned the importance of maintaining the "Boise way of life"—big city opportunities with a small-town feel—and the preservation of historic and aesthetic norms and attitudes.

Preservationists do not necessarily oppose development or growth, but they do oppose it in particular areas, in particular forms and without adequate consultation. For those interested in **socio-cultural preservation**, the lack of adequate and collaborative **governance** is therefore also a major issue.

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION THEMES

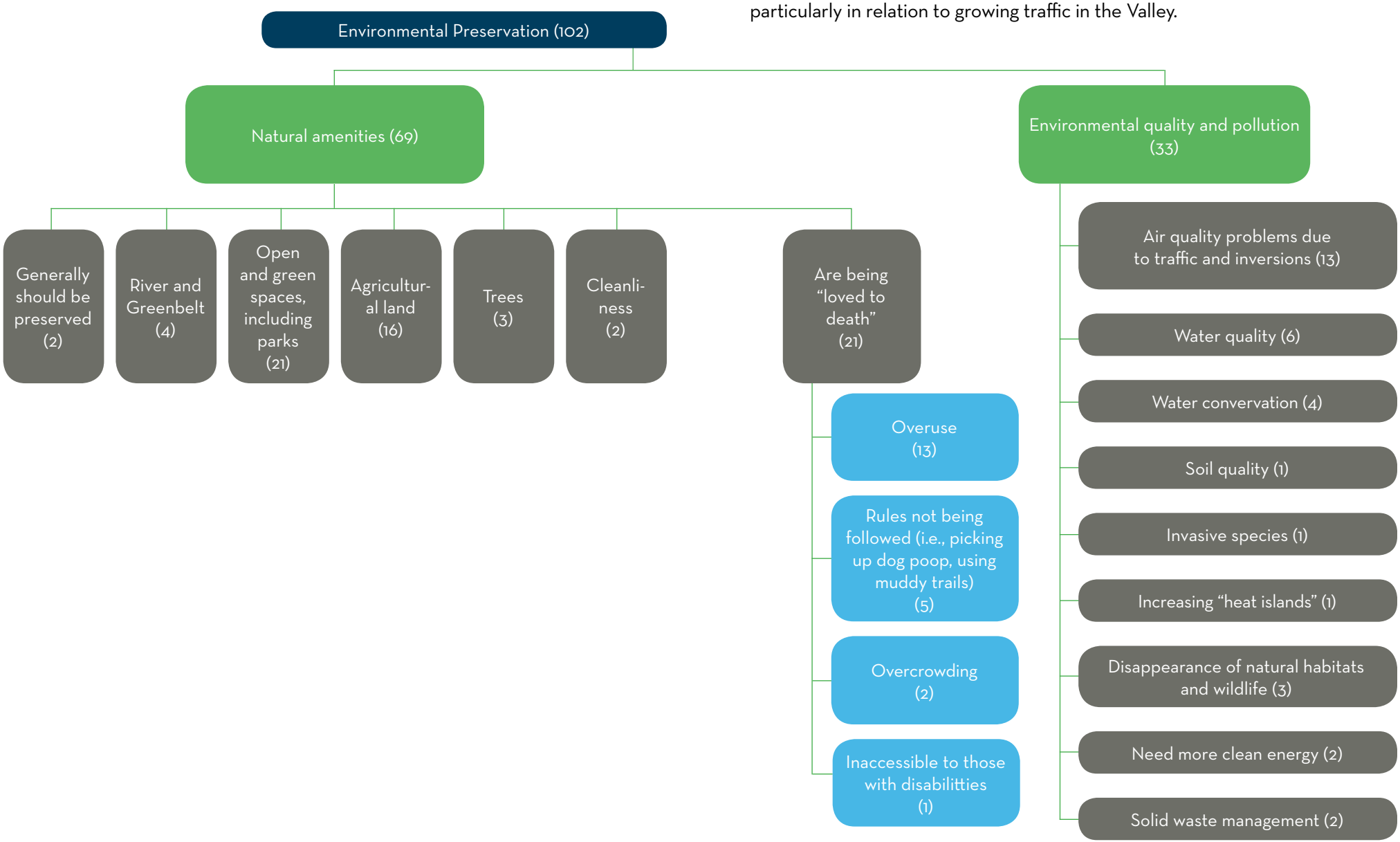
THEME	# OF TIMES MENTIONED
Neighborhood planning and design	53
Boise culture and behaviors	22
Downtown development	39
Natural amenities	69
Environmental quality and pollution	33
TOTAL	**216**

The themes most mentioned by socio-cultural preservationists had to do with the incursion of certain types of growth into neighborhoods; the need to develop more "hubs" or community centers outside of downtown; the risk of losing Boise's culture of friendliness and accessibility; and patterns of growth downtown.



In addition to some of the socio-cultural attributes that contribute to "Boise"-ness, participants also identified what they saw as "core" geographic or environmental attributes. Many of these also came up during the discussions of what people appreciated about life in Boise.

Environmental preservation, therefore, has to do with the protection of existing natural amenities and with environmental quality. In particular, participants noted the importance of being able to access the Greenbelt and the Foothills easily. But they are also concerned that these environmental amenities are being "loved to death," and that more must be done to protect and care for them. Air quality was also mentioned frequently as a concern, particularly in relation to growing traffic in the Valley.



In sticky dot voting, **environmental preservation** received a relatively high number of votes. Of note is the fact that only a few of the **cultural preservation elements** made it into the voting options, perhaps because other threats seemed more tangible or significant. Nonetheless, the refrain, "Keep Boise Boise" was heard frequently at the workshops.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF DOTS
Losing core geographic/environmental elements (i.e., River, foothills, open space)	54
Water quality/quantity and air quality	24
Maintaining livability (affordability and friendliness)	15
Loss of recreation access	13
Habitat/farmland loss	9
Support for local business	5
TOTAL	**120**

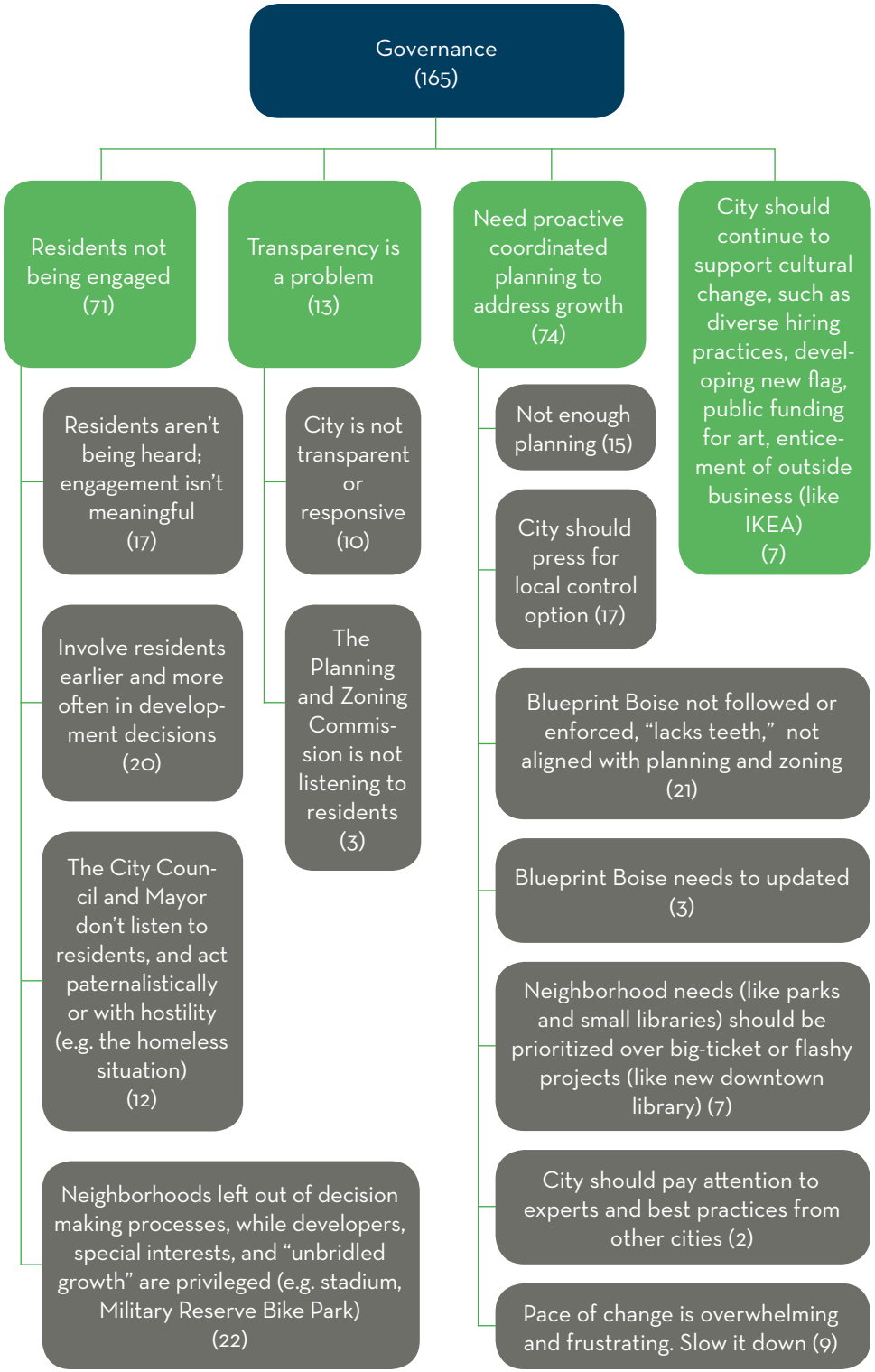
GOVERNANCE

Governance in this context could be defined as how we make decisions about our shared political and cultural lives. As should be clear by now, **governance** is a theme that cuts across many of the other areas of concern. Participants in the workshops felt that the City could improve in the areas of communication, education and participation when it comes to decision-making. There was also a general sense that "money talks," meaning that planning documents and even planning and zoning could be circumvented if the project was seen as desirable or lucrative enough.

Above all, residents want to make sure that planning is done collaboratively and that it is meaningful. Some perceive Blueprint Boise as "lacking teeth." And they want the City to be able to exercise a local control tax option.

GOVERNANCE THEMES

THEME	# OF TIMES MENTIONED
Residents not being engaged	71
Not enough transparency	13
Need coordinated planning	74
City should lead on cultural change	7
TOTAL	**165**



In sticky dot voting, **governance** themes clearly resonated, as trust, the local option and planning emerged as key issues garnering a number of votes. Although these issues were not mentioned as frequently in table conversations as other themes, the fact that they received a high number of sticky dot votes suggests that they resonate with residents when they are raised, and could become increasingly problematic for the City moving forward if not addressed.

TOPIC	# OF DOTS
Trust in public officials; City leaders not engaging with community/transparency	39
Want more public voice and participation, esp. w/neighborhoods	35
Need local option to deal with antagonism from state	32
Coordinated planning efforts and prioritization; development rules that don't align with Blueprint Boise	30
Need more focus outside of downtown and on neighborhood centers—incl. rezoning, building sidewalks	26
Controlled growth	14
Undue influence from outsiders, especially developers (+public funding for private projects)	9
Attracting diversity	8
Want better flag	4
TOTAL	**197**

DATA COMPARISON ACROSS THEMES

DATA COMPARISON ACROSS THEMES: TOTALS

THEME	# OF MENTIONS	STICKY DOT VOTES
Housing Affordability	421	179
Transportation	271	200
Socio-Cultural and Environmental Preservation	216	120
Governance	165	197

RESULTS FROM ONLINE FORUM

The online forum differed from the live Community Workshops in important ways: comments were entered asynchronously; participants were not responding to their fellow residents in conversation; and online comments were recorded in full, as participants entered them (as opposed to being recorded by a facilitator in terms of general themes).

Given these differences, the results from the online forum are presented here, separately from the results of the in-person workshops. When appropriate, similarities and differences are noted.

Online participants were asked, "When you think about the way Boise has grown over the past few years, what positive changes come to mind?" Answers to this question were treated methodologically the same way as answers in the workshops were—they were organized by category so that they could be aggregated and counted. When possible, categories were kept consistent between the in-person and online workshops. New categories that emerged only in the online forum are presented below in italics.

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT BOISE

1. Improving economy (businesses, jobs, wages) (44)
2. Restaurants (38)
3. Vibrant downtown (35)
4. Diversity (30)
5. *None* (29)
6. Parks (29)
7. Events (26)
8. Culture (17)
9. Greenbelt (16)
10. Bikeable (15)
11. Arts (14)
12. Neighborhood *revitalization* (12)
13. Shopping (11)
14. Outdoor activities and recreation (10)
15. Open space (9)
16. *Development of mixed-use, high-density infill, esp. downtown (9)*
17. Opportunities (7)
18. Architecture (6)
19. Libraries (6)
20. Universities (6)
21. *Increasing housing values* (5)
22. *Increasing social services* (5)
23. People (5)
24. Beer/breweries (5)
25. Small-town feel (5)
26. *Investments in infrastructure* (4)
27. Composting and recycling (4)
28. Engaged (4)
29. Hotels (4)
30. Markets (4)
31. Quality of local government (4)
32. Sustainability (3)
33. Mass transportation (3)
34. Clean (3)
35. Community (3)
36. Welcoming (3)
37. Family-friendly (2)
38. Housing (2)
39. Growing (2)
40. Preservation (2)
41. Refugees (2)
42. Safe (2)
43. Walkable (2)
44. Inclusive (1)
45. Health care (1)
46. History (1)
47. Green spaces (1)
48. Environment (1)
49. Accessible (1)
50. Agriculture (1)
51. Improved air travel (1)
52. Beauty (1)
53. Police (1)
54. River (1)
55. Sports (1)
56. Trees (1)
57. Schools (1)
58. Young (1)
59. *Politically progressive* (1)
60. *Acknowledging Native American history (1)*
61. *National recognition (1)*
62. *Regional growth (1)*

Important differences between these results and the in-person workshops are that 29 of the online participants indicated that they saw nothing positive about growth in the City. If in-person participants felt that way, that information was most likely not shared.

A side-by-side comparison of the top ten positives from the two meetings is also instructive:

IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS	ONLINE FORUM
1. Outdoor activities and recreation (boating, hiking, golf, etc.) (51)	1. Improving economy (businesses, jobs, wages) (44)
2. Friendly (hospitable, welcoming, nice, kind) (51)	2. Restaurants (38)
3. Accessible (42)	3. Vibrant downtown (35)
4. Arts (Public art, museums) (37)	4. Diversity (30)
5. Environment (nature, outdoors) (37)	5. *None* (29)
6. Vibrant downtown (32)	6. Parks (29)
7. Parks (31)	7. Events (26)
8. Small-town feel (livability, ease) (30)	8. Culture (17)
9. Bikeable (28)	9. Greenbelt (16)
10. Community (connected) (27)	10. Bikeable (15)

Similarities across the two groups include the high number of mentions given to the City's **vibrant downtown**, its **bikeability** and its **parks**. Both groups also seem to value the development of culture, the arts, events, and activities, though the online forum participants privileged the development of new restaurants and cultural events while the in-person participants seemed to privilege outdoor activities.

One important difference is that the online participants mentioned **economic development**—the addition of new businesses, more jobs and higher wages—as being extremely important. Such mentions were much lower on the list for in-person workshops.

WHAT CONCERNS US ABOUT GROWTH

Online participants were asked, "What most concerns you when you think about growth in Boise?" Responses were coded using many of the same categories use for analyzing the in-person workshops, when possible.

Generally speaking, the results from the online forum mirrored the results from the community workshops, in that the four main themes appeared again: housing affordability, transportation, socio-cultural and environmental preservation, and governance. But there were some shifts in emphasis for online participants, which are noted below.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (217 TOTAL COMMENTS)

Comments about housing affordability followed similar themes as the in-person meetings. But there was more focus on fears of displacement, and in particular, some anger about being displaced by those from out of state. Diversity of housing stock was discussed very little, compared with the in-person meetings, and smart-growth was also not as much of a focus.

Housing affordability (73)

- General lack of (46)
- Rising rents (13)
- For working class (3)
- For homeless and near-homeless (5)
- For families (2)
- For young people (3)
- Fear of market crashing (1)

Lack of stock (1)

Displacement (33)

- Of native residents (13)
- Due to rising property taxes (8)
- As gentrification (6)
- By Californians (6)

Housing development (28)

- Unchecked (3)
- Not enough infrastructure to support development (17)
- Residents, not developers, will "foot the bill" (3)
- Too many apartment structures being built (1)
- Not environmentally sustainable (1)
- Property management companies are predatory (2)
- Not quality (1)

Wage stagnation (27)

- Lack of well-paying jobs (5)
- Wages not keeping pace with cost of living increases (19)
- Minimum wage too low (1)
- Contributing to income inequality (2)

Social services lacking (18)

- Childcare/programming (3)
- Need for more policing (2)
- Not enough health care providers (2)
- Addiction services (1)
- Mental health services (1)
- Homeless services (4)
- Affordability of health care (1)
- Public education (4)

Rapid, low-density urban sprawl has negative effects (20)

- Need for smart-growth (17)
- Need more density and infill (6)
- Too much NIMBYism (5)
- Focus on developing walkable neighborhood hubs outside core (6)

TRANSPORTATION (231 TOTAL COMMENTS)

There are important differences between the in-person and online groups when it comes to transportation. Where the in-person groups seemed to achieve some consensus about the importance of developing a workable mass transit system, and preferring a lightrail option in particular, the online group was much more focused on transportation *problems* and not *solutions*. Traffic congestion and extended commute times were mentioned 81 times, and there were a number of comments questioning the wisdom of building a lightrail project. The online group also focused somewhat less on tensions with ACHD and focused more on the challenges of navigating a city beset with road construction.

Furthermore, the online forum featured *more* comments about transportation than about affordable housing. That is an important difference between the in-person and online meetings, because it suggests that anger over traffic will fuel citizen discontent against the City, perhaps even more than the problems posed by affordable housing.

Traffic congestion and commute times (81)

Mass transit (45)

- Should be developed (38)
- But may not have enough actual users/will be too expensive/a boondoggle (5)
- Develop train/lightrail (2)

Existing public transportation needs to be improved (37)

- Better, more frequent, and more bus routes (12)
- Improve walkability (8)
- Improve bikeability (7)
- Driving should be dis-incentivized (10)

Not enough parking (10)

Parking too expensive (1)

Road infrastructure inadequate and construction everywhere (17)

Loss of connectivity across town (3)

Poor road etiquette (7)

- Increasing road rage (5)
- Bicyclists behaving badly (1)
- Need education for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians (1)

Noise pollution (1)

Need to plan ahead (3)

Need regional planning (25)

- Must be regionally focused (4)
- Tension between ACHD control and City control (7)
- ACHD not keeping up with growth (7)
- No to trolley/circulator project (7)

More flights (1)

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION (196 TOTAL COMMENTS)

The online comments also emphasized threats to the culture of Boise much more than the data from the in-person meetings seemed to (although this was a theme of both). Comments about culture rivaled comments about affordable housing and traffic, in fact, a notable change from the in-person meetings.

There were a number of comments related to the sense that the identity of the city is changing, and online comments were notably more hostile to the arrival of outsiders. There were also many more comments about increasing crime. Perhaps the online format made people feel they could be more open about their fears and anger—the language across the online forum seemed more intense and emotional than the in-person meetings, even though the in-person meetings were largely constructive-critical in tone.

Identity of city changing (83)

- Increasing conservatism (1)
- Increasing progressivism (3)
- Locals losing out to transplants (5)
- Overpopulation/overcrowding (8)
- Resistance to increased diversity (2)
- Not enough diversity (1)
- Loss of Boise culture (25)
- Character/sense of community (12)
- Increasing apathy/fatalism (1)
- Not as friendly (4)
- More materialistic (1)
- Local businesses losing out to big-money projects (1)
- Loss of historical buildings and landmarks (6)

Loss of livability (38)

- Loss of quality of life (11)
- Loss of small-town feel (7)
- Increased crime (18)
- Events more crowded (1)
- Less ease of living (1)

Neighborhood development (19)

- Development of high-traffic projects in neighborhoods (e.g., St. Luke's) (4)
- Development of high-density projects in rural neighborhoods or inappropriate spaces (e.g., Hill Road) (11)
- Flood risk (1)
- Historic neighborhoods must be preserved (2)
- Should not privilege smart-growth to the exclusion of single-family homes (1)

Downtown development (19)

- Local businesses displaced by outside businesses/chains (5)
- Too many tall buildings downtown (5)
- Lackluster architectural design (6)
- Losing character (1)
- Too many hotels (1)
- Need more residential growth (1)

Loss of core environmental attributes (37)

- Loss of farmland (9)
- Loss of open space/green space (e.g., Dry Creek) (26)
- Loss of public lands (2)

Environmental preservation and quality (38)

- Pollution (general) (7)
- Loving outdoor amenities like trails and Greenbelt "to death" (8)
- Solid waste disposal (1)
- Air quality (7)
- Water quality (5)
- Water quantity (2)
- Too much development in the Foothills (3)
- Need better access to Foothills from east (1)
- Litter (1)
- Loss of habitat (2)
- Loss of wildlife (1)

GOVERNANCE (70 TOTAL COMMENTS)

Online responses having to do with governance and the City's role in decision-making closely mirrored that of the in-person meetings, although there were many fewer having to do with this issue in the online forum. Residents feel they aren't being heard, that growth is happening too fast and that developers have an inside track with the City.

That said, there was much less focus on the role of local control and on Blueprint Boise not "having teeth." Perhaps these were areas where, in the in-person meetings, some social learning happened (people learning about these issues from others at their tables) but online participants did not know or care as much about.

There were also a few contributors to the online forum who expressed extreme displeasure about the progressive politics of the City.

Residents not being included in decision-making (12)

- No public input (5)
- Not listening to residents (4)
- Engage earlier and more often on development (1)
- Poor signage/forms of engagement (2)

Lack of transparency and trustworthiness (30)

- Mayor/City Council doesn't listen/out of touch/too much ego (4)
- Misrepresentation of projects (e.g., Gary Lane) (1)
- Developer voices are given priority over residents (8)
- Over-focus on downtown/ core to exclusion of outer neighborhoods (6)
- Lack of accountability (2)
- Amenity projects (e.g., stadium) being prioritized over infrastructure (9)

Lack of local option: cannot tax for improvements (3)

Overly favorable attitude toward growth (15)

- Allowing growth to happen too fast/unchecked (13)
- Stop marketing Boise to the nation/promoting growth (2)

Lack of managed planning (14)

- Lack of regional planning and cooperation (3)
- No plan, not being proactive, or Blueprint Boise not being followed/enforced (11)

Problems with progressive agenda (5)

- School budgets increasing too much (1)
- Composting/recycling too expensive (1)
- Levies too expensive (1)
- Too much focus on housing for immigrants/refugees, not enough for American citizens (1)
- Too much focus on bike lanes (1)

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

Please note that time prevented an analysis of the questions that asked which areas online participants would like the City to focus most on preserving, and which issues they are most concerned about. Analyzing this data would give a snapshot of concerns similar to sticky dot voting. Decision-makers may want to read the answers to these questions on the website.

APPENDIX 1

Aggregated categories: table conversations (positive)

Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of time the category (or a specific example within that category) was recorded during a table conversation. Categories are listed from highest number of mentions to lowest. Some categories refer to things people appreciate about Boise now—such as its accessibility—and some refer to things people are looking forward to—such as the development of better mass transportation.

Outdoor activities and recreation (boating, hiking, golf, etc.) (51)

Friendly (hospitable, welcoming, nice, kind) (51)

Accessible (42)

Arts (Public art, museums) (37)

Environment (nature, outdoors) (37)

Vibrant downtown (32)

Parks (31)

Small-town feel (livability, ease) (30)

Bikeable (28)

Community (connected) (27)

Diversity (27)

Events (concerts, festivals) (29)

Greenbelt (25)

Neighborhoods (24)

Safe (24)

Foothills (and trails) (23)

River (22)

Universities (22)

Schools (19)

Clean (17)

Open space (17)

Walkable (17)

Engaged (energetic, interested, vitality) (16)

Restaurants (16)

Culture (14)

Families (13)

History (13)

Affordable (12)

Local government (accessible, effective) (11)

Refugees (11)

Local businesses (11)

Mass transportation (11)

Welcoming/open-minded (11)

Opportunities (10)

Markets (9)

Climate (8)

Green spaces (8)

Housing (8)

Libraries (8)

People (8)

Airport (7)

Beer/Breweries (7)

Giving (6)

Shopping (6)

Sports (e.g., football) (8)

Trees (6)

Beauty (5)

Health care (5)

Inclusive (5)

Young (4)

Agriculture (4)

Composting and recycling (4)

Dogs (4)

Economy (including local business development, jobs, and wages) (3)

Growing (3)

Identity (3)

Active (3)

Landscapes (3)

Place (3)

Police (3)

Unique (3)

Wildlife (3)

Architecture (2)

Capitol (2)

Character (2)

Peaceful (and quiet) (2)

Streets (2)

Central (1)

Collaborative (1)

Comfortable (1)

Creative (1)

Dating (1)

Geothermal (1)

Habitat (1)

Healthy (1)

Hearts (1)

Heritage (1)

Honest (1)

Hospitals (1)

Hotels (1)

Impact (1)

Innovative (1)

Planning (1)

Preservation (1)

Water (1)

Wine (1)

Jen Schneider is Professor and co-Director in the School of Public Service at Boise State University. She is also the Director of the PhD Program in Public Policy and Administration. Dr. Schneiders's research addresses challenges in the public communication of scientific and environmental controversies, with a particular focus on stakeholder engagement, the rhetoric of expertise, and communicating about science and technology in teams. Jen has worked on a number of projects funded by the National Science Foundation, and has been affiliated with the National Academy of Engineering.

Recent projects include the books Under Pressure: Coal Industry Rhetoric and Neoliberalism (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and The Joy of Science: Seven Principles for Scientists Seeking Happiness, Harmony, and Success. Her 2010 book Engineering and Sustainable Community Development, co-authored with Juan Lucena and Jon Leydens, has been used in classrooms around the world. Jen teaches courses on the Philosophy of Social Inquiry, U.S. Energy Policy, Science and Environmental Communication, Qualitative Methods, and Science, Technology, and Society (STS).