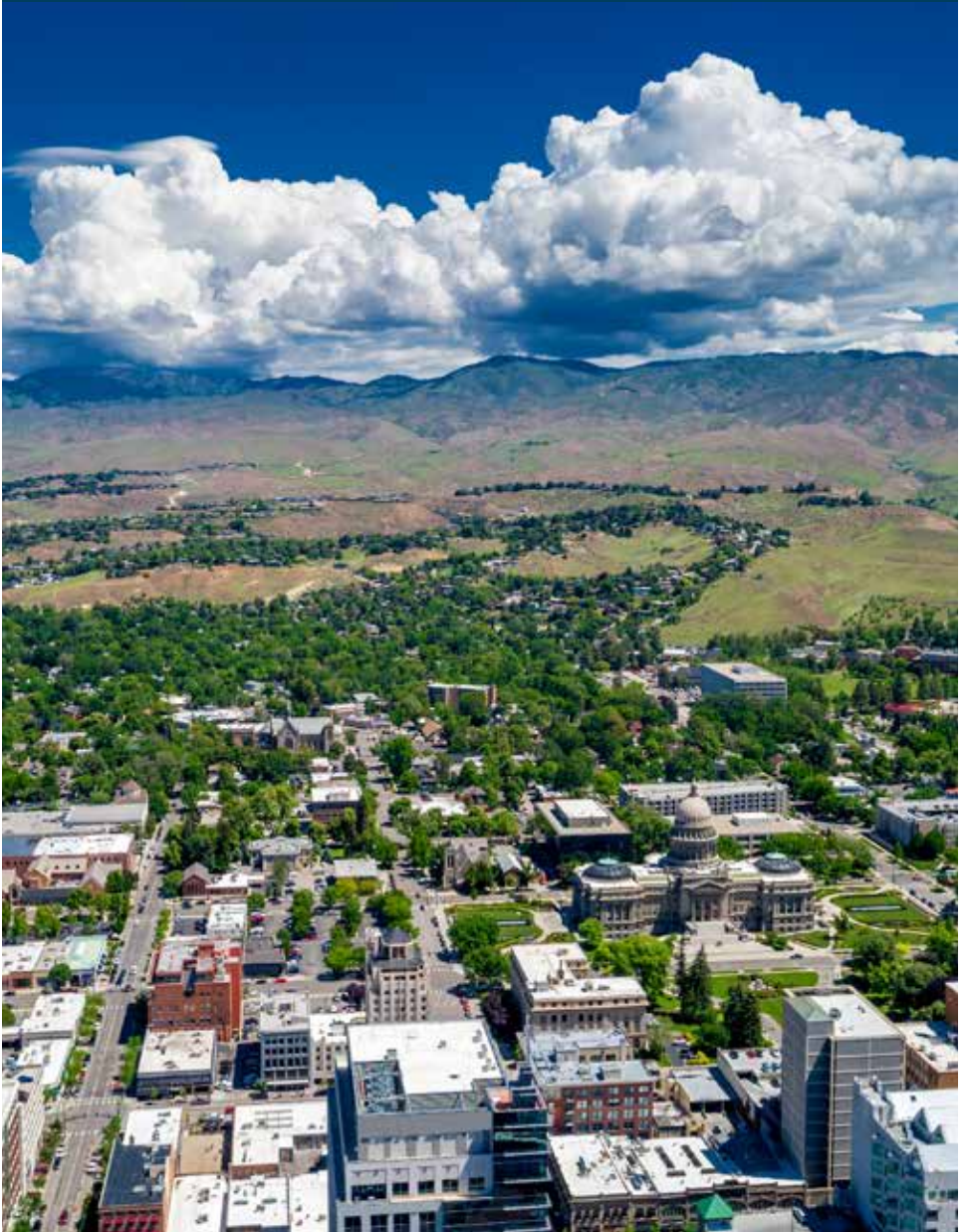


CITY OF BOISE
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
SERIES TWO REPORT 2018

Dr. Jen Schneider, Boise State University





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the findings from the second series of Community Conversations hosted by the City of Boise in August 2018. Participants were guided through a discussion of three scenarios that featured different types of housing developments. Discussion centered around who would benefit from each type of development, who might be disadvantaged, and related areas of concern, such as transportation, preservation, and governance. Findings can be grouped into the two broad themes described below.



SMART, CREATIVE,
HUMAN-CENTERED
GROWTH



PLANNING AND
PARTICIPATION



SMART, CREATIVE, HUMAN-CENTERED GROWTH

- 1) Though they were not asked to pick a preferred scenario, **most participants preferred that higher-density developments be developed closer to the core.**

- 2) But not just any old high-density will do. Participants also want developers to be much more creative in how they design and build housing. They want the focus to be on **building neighborhoods and fostering human well-being**, not just on housing projects. They want a wider variety of housing options, including very small, very affordable housing units. And they want housing projects to provide access to green/open space, transit, and commercial and employment opportunities nearby.

- 3) That said, participants seemed to disagree, even if mostly implicitly, about **what is meant by “affordable housing,”** and who is most in need of protection from rising rents and home prices. The city should not assume everyone means the same thing when they use this phrase.

- 4) Many participants are struggling with competing values and contradictions:
 - Many are grappling with the tension between **private property rights** (the right of people to sell their land to developers, and of developers to make certain decisions within the law) and the **“common good”**—the need for more affordable housing, environmentally sustainable development and mass transit. There are very different views about what government can and should do to intervene in the market.
 - Similarly, many want developers to pay more for infrastructure, schools and other services, but want homes to be much more affordable than they are now.
 - And participants wanted more apartment buildings, especially in areas where apartment buildings would not disrupt current neighborhood cultures, convenience and aesthetics, but they also fear that apartment buildings can be poorly built and encourage crime in neighborhoods.



PLANNING AND PARTICIPATION

- 1) Participants are extremely worried that **planning is not happening proactively**, or with enough participation from residents.
- 2) At the same time, many are concerned that the city is too focused on future residents and not enough on issues current residents are facing. Some participants continue to worry that as Boise grows, current residents will lose out, whether financially or in terms of their way of life changing. **They feel they are being left behind**, and that new arrivals are dictating the terms of growth. This paradox—wanting the city to plan for the future, and paying attention to those who feel left behind now—is one the city and its residents will have to navigate moving forward.
- 3) Participants have many, many questions about the processes that guide development. Many are confused about what the city can and cannot control; want more information about planning and zoning decisions; and want more opportunities to engage the process, in different ways and at different stages than is currently mandated.



INTRODUCTION

This report presents results from the second series of Community Conversations organized by the Mayor's Office of Community Engagement in August 2018. These Community Conversations were the third in a series of events used to collect feedback and insights from Boise residents on the topic of growth in the city:

1) FOCUS GROUPS

The first events held were two small focus groups, designed to gather information from both long-term and new-to-Boise residents about the issues of most concern to them related to growth. Feedback from these focus groups was used to help design the next series of meetings.



2) COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS (SERIES 1)

Three two-hour Community Workshops were held in June 2018 and focused specifically on guiding participants through a modified World Café discussion related to growth. These workshops had two objectives: to provide opportunities for residents to dialogue meaningfully with one another on the topic of growth, and to gather information about resident priorities that could guide the Mayor and City Council in decision-making. Small groups were guided through a series of discussion questions by trained facilitators, and large-group report-outs and sticky-dot voting gave some insight into areas of greatest concern for residents. Four main themes emerged from the analysis of that first set of workshops as most important to Boiseans: housing affordability, transportation, cultural and environmental preservation and governance. A report detailing those outcomes can be found at cityofboise.org/growth.



3) COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS (SERIES 2)

The second series of large community meetings was held in August 2018. As a result of the Community Conversations, the city hoped to:

- guide participants through a discussion of trade-offs, values and preferences related to the topic they identified as being of greatest concern to them in Series 1—housing affordability;
- identify where residents have questions or confusion about this issue, and about the city’s role;
- encourage participants to evaluate hypothetical housing developments in relation to the other three themes identified in Series 1: transportation, cultural/environmental preservation and governance, even though housing remained the primary focus of the exercises; and
- begin some discussion and education around where the city’s sphere of control lies: What can the city do to address residents’ concern about growth? And conversely, what lies outside the city’s sphere of control? What decisions are made by private land-owners, developers, other government agencies and the market?

Three hypothetical housing scenarios were used to guide discussion during these Series 2 meetings. Meeting details and the scenarios are described in the sections below.

DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The two Community Conversations were held in August 2018 and were organized by the Mayor's Office of Community Engagement. The Conversations were moderated by Dr. Jen Schneider, professor in the School of Public Service at Boise State University, and used a Scenario Planning model of engagement. Participants were seated at tables with trained facilitators who guided them through a series of questions related to three housing development scenarios (further described in the next section).

Participant comments were recorded on paper by table facilitators. During the large-group open discussion at the end of the conversation, participant comments were recorded on large pieces of butcher paper hung in the room.

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 Community Conversations 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. Participants from Series 1 were also invited. As was the case with Series 1, there was significant interest in the days following the announcement of the event.

Because of the 30% attrition rate that occurred during Series 1, Series 2 organizers opted to host two events instead of three, but to accept a greater number of RSVPs to encourage fuller attendance. Following feedback from Series 1 that suggested more diverse groups of people might be able to attend if one of the events was held on a Saturday, the first event was held Saturday, August 25, at City Hall. The organizers also hoped for additional geographic diversity during this round of Conversations, so the second conversation was held on Tuesday, August 28, at Timberline High School. Those who showed up for either meeting without having registered were allowed to attend.

As a result, participation numbers were improved for these two meetings as compared with Series 1 (see table below).

An online portal was also created, so that those who could not attend the meetings in person could still provide their feedback. The online portal was open from August 24-August 31, and mimicked the in-person experience of scenario planning as closely as possible. Of those who entered the survey, 97 finished it to completion; partial responses were not counted. The online survey was also available in Spanish, though no Spanish-speakers responded. The results from the online forum are presented separately in this report.

	DATE	LOCATION	# OF ATTENDEES
CONVERSATION #1	August 25	City Hall Council Chambers	66
CONVERSATION #2	August 28	Timberline High School	114
ONLINE WORKSHOP	August 27-August 31	cityofboise.org/growth	106
TOTAL			

The locations that were chosen were available on the dates needed; had accessible parking; differed from Series 1 (the planning team wanted some geographic diversity); had venues large enough to seat more than 100 people at round tables; and allowed for catering services (food was provided to participants because the events took place during the breakfast or dinner hour).

The community workshops were scheduled for two hours, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. on August 25, and from 6-8 p.m., August 28. Roughly speaking, the following outline was followed for each meeting:

1. Introductory remarks by the lead facilitator, covering the findings from Series 1, introducing the concept of Scenario Planning, and going over some basics related to housing and incomes in Boise (15 minutes).

2. Review of Scenario 1 by lead facilitator (5 minutes).
3. Discussion of Scenario 1 at tables, led by table facilitators (20 minutes).
4. Review of Scenario 2 by lead facilitator (5 minutes).
5. Discussion of Scenario 2 at tables, led by table facilitators (20 minutes).
6. Review of Scenario 3 by lead facilitator (5 minutes).
7. Discussion of Scenario 3 at tables, led by table facilitators (20 minutes).
8. Open discussion, led by lead facilitator (25 minutes).
9. Comment cards and wrap-up (5 minutes).

Results from participant comment cards and the online forum are integrated when appropriate into the Findings and Recommendations sections below.

PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUE:



SCENARIO PLANNING

Scenarios are increasingly being used by cities and other organizations to facilitate discussion among multiple options. Scenario planning can facilitate the discussion of trade-offs between choices where paths forward are not always clear or are contested. Discussions of different scenarios can also help participants and facilitators identify competing, contradictory, or complementary values and preferences, and highlight areas where further information and deliberation is needed. Ideally, scenarios can

also help participants understand multiple points of view, as they ask participants to consider the impacts of particular projects or policies on those other than themselves.

For Series 2, the lead facilitator worked with the City of Boise to draft three possible housing scenarios: experts from the Office of Community Engagement and Planning and Development Services (PDS) were involved in scenario writing. Writing the scenarios presented some significant challenges:

TIME

We had a limited amount of time with participants. Though many participants said on the comment cards they would have liked more time for discussion and many called for more meetings, asking residents to commit more than two hours of their time frequently reduces the likelihood that they will actually attend meetings. This is particularly true for working people and people with families. We endeavored to stick to the two-hour time block, but at the same time wanted to cover three scenarios so participants would have opportunities to compare them for differences.

FOCUS

As was noted above, Series 1 revealed that Boise residents are concerned about housing, transportation, preservation and governance. We knew we could not do a “deep dive” into each of these issues in just two hours. We endeavored to write the scenarios in such a way that, while the primary focus would be on housing, participants would nonetheless be encouraged to consider impacts on transportation, the culture of neighborhoods and the city, environmental impacts, and the city’s role in governance. Still, comment cards reveal that some participants left the meetings wondering why only housing had been discussed.

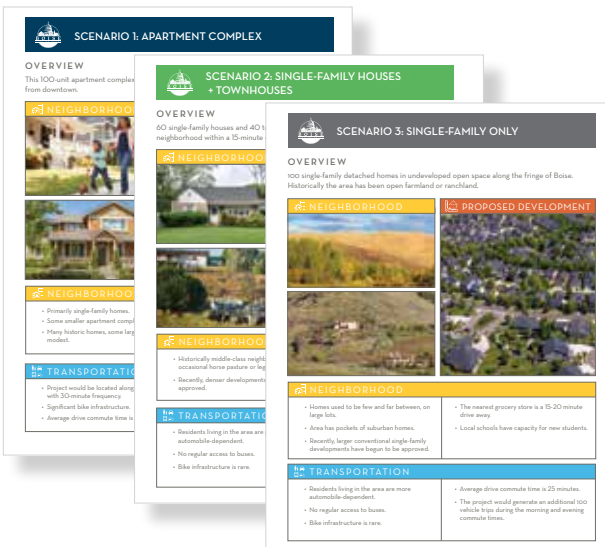
COMPLEXITY

The process of siting a housing development (even a hypothetical one) is complex, involving many actors, rules, regulations, processes and laws. We knew that we needed to provide enough information to participants that discussion would be relevant and meaningful, but not so much that

participants would be overwhelmed. Scenarios went through multiple revisions—including several dry runs with groups of City of Boise staff. The final version aimed for just enough information to provoke discussion, but not so much as to drown participants in detail. Information cards about median-incomes in Boise, for individuals and families, were also provided, as was information about the Planning Review process.

DIVERSE EXPERTISE

Participants who attended these events varied widely in terms of their knowledge of the housing issue, and related issues. Some knew Blueprint Boise in and out, and/or interacted professionally with PDS on a regular basis. For others, this was their first time thinking through the development process. Some were environmental experts, some were from neighborhood associations and some had personal experience with homelessness. We had to work to make things accessible and meaningful for a wide range of experiences and perspectives—no easy task.



The three scenarios can be found in Appendix 1. The cards used to describe median incomes and home prices, as well as the Planning Review Process, can be found in Appendix 2.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection for Series 2 functioned much like it did for Series 1, though there was less of a focus on tallying particular comments and more of a focus on identifying trade-offs and the articulation of values, contradictions and misunderstandings. Facilitators took notes at tables. These notes were transcribed, and then responses were analyzed for similarities and grouped by theme, when possible. Responses were recorded until saturation was reached, meaning no new responses emerged from the analysis. Large group discussion notes were also transcribed and analyzed, and are referred to in the discussion below. Images of all original notes can be found online at cityofboise.org/growth.

Comment card responses were also typed up, then grouped by category and analyzed. Participants frequently commented on the process, but also on specific policies, and made recommendations for future action. Comment card data and their groupings can be found in Appendix 3.

Online comments were transcribed and analyzed in the same way as in-person comments were—categories were compared against the categories developed for the in-person meetings until saturation was reached. Many of the same themes emerged in the online forum, though with different issues stressed. When appropriate, differences are noted in the sections below. Incomplete responses were not included in the analysis, and one respondent who entered responses twice was only counted once.

Following the Series 2 conversations, the lead facilitator also met with table facilitators to hear more about their experiences leading conversations, and to identify important areas of emphasis or confusion on the part of participants. The bulk of this feedback echoes the findings presented below; when it was not echoed by the participant data, it was not included.

The Findings section below discusses 1) the types of conversations participants had about each scenario; 2) some of the trade-offs participants grappled with when it came to housing; and 3) information challenges and value contradictions participants struggled with when it came to understanding processes, desiring specific policies or actions, articulating their role and the role of the city, and choosing between different options.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE SERIES 2 IN-PERSON MEETINGS

For each scenario, participants were generally asked to reflect on three questions:

1. Who would benefit if this hypothetical project were to be built?
2. Who would be disadvantaged if this development went forward?
3. What impacts or processes most concern you about a development like this one?

Findings below briefly report, in aggregate, on the discussions participants had about each scenario.



SCENARIO 1

Scenario 1 featured a hypothetical, 100-unit apartment building, proposed near downtown, for renters only. Additional details can be found in Appendix 1, but this scenario could be thought of as the highest-density scenario discussed at the meeting. Some portion of the apartments for rent in this scenario would also be set aside for those below median income.

Participants who felt positively about this hypothetical development liked that it would provide some housing at below market rate, which could be good for young parents and professionals, elderly on fixed incomes and others. They also liked the idea of people from different socio-economic classes bringing some diversity to the neighborhood. They felt that this was a “smart-growth” type of development, meaning it would allow workers to be closer to their employers, it would benefit local businesses, lead to

more “living locally,” and encourage non-auto transit. Table facilitators also reported later that after reviewing all three scenarios, many participants referred back to this one as the type of development that the city should be encouraging more of.

Many participants noted, however, that the devil would be in the details: the aesthetics of the development would need to fit the look of the neighborhood, for example. Many also felt strongly that such developments must allow for amenities such as green space, so that renters would have places to be outside, and for children to play. And existing neighbors would need to be meaningfully engaged in the siting and development process—many doubted that developers really do much to involve neighbors and others in their public meetings.

Those worried about developments of this sort were particularly concerned about the kinds of change that an apartment building like this would bring to the neighborhood. Some spoke of a “permanent renting class,” which might not have “pride of ownership.” These participants were worried about increased noise, pet traffic, trash/litter, crime and cultural conflict. Although the scenario was hypothetical, some of these participants wanted information about what kind of renter was being recruited to live in this development, implying some kinds might be a better fit for the neighborhood—and thus more welcome—than others. There was also some concern that this development was being built specifically for those migrating into the state, rather than for existing residents, though no such information was specified.

These participants were not necessarily NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) but they were very concerned about the welfare of people already living in the neighborhood, and struggles they might have with parking, decreased property values and crowded schools. They want the city to take action to ensure these developments will be of quality construction, that they will be managed properly and that they will not fall into disrepair, bringing blight to the neighborhood. This was especially true for online participants, who both wanted to see more affordable housing being built, but were also especially resistant to such developments turning into tenement-style housing, fostering crime and blight.



SCENARIO 2

Scenario 2 included another 100 hypothetical units, but this time the housing would be a mix of single-family homes and townhomes, of which a small portion would be available to median-level income individuals and families. The development would be further away from the core, but not on the outskirts of town, either. Still, residents would be mostly automobile-dependent.

Scenario 2 provoked the widest variety of responses—and the most ambivalence. This is perhaps because Scenario 2 represented the most common or familiar type of neighborhood for residents in the Boise area, but maybe also the kind of neighborhood that is increasingly financially out of reach, and also the most threatened by changes incurred from growth.

Participants noted that many different stakeholders would benefit from a development of this sort: the development company and its workers; young families and professionals who didn't want to live so close to the city core; schools; the property owner who sold the property to the development, local businesses, and so on. The city would also benefit from increased home ownership and an increased tax base, and existing residents would probably see their home values go up.

But there were concerns about this development that arose during discussion. To list a few:

- This type of development doesn't seem to meaningfully address the lack of affordable housing for low-income people

- It will increase traffic and promote car culture, which will impact air pollution
- This kind of development exacerbates other environmental problems as well, such as water treatment and provision

Online participants in particular were especially worried about the impacts on traffic, and some vehemently pointed out that developments like this were being built without the city planning for more and wider roads to accommodate increased traffic needs.

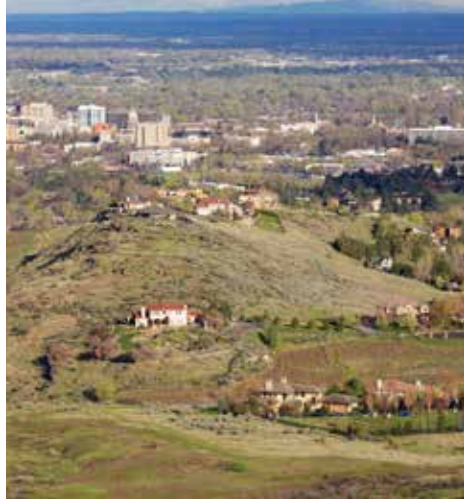
As was the case with Scenario 1, participants would only support this development if it would meaningfully contribute to a sense of neighborhood, where people could have good quality of life, access to amenities, access to different types of transit and a sense of well-being. They also wanted developers and the city to think creatively about ways to preserve and transform open space—could community gardens be built? Parks be constructed? Green common areas preserved? A few online participants, on the other hand, felt that open space should be preserved as is, and not be transformed into parks. They seemed to want to preserve some of the “wildness” that typifies the landscapes around Boise.

The need for public transit also came up again as a topic of major concern, as did the tension between city planning and ACHD (Ada County Highway District). Table facilitators also verbally confirmed that this was a major concern among participants. Another common theme—the need for the local tax option, so that the city could fund its own transit projects—also emerged during this series of conversations.

In other words, there was some sense that a development of this sort could be done in a “smart” way, but that careful planning and oversight would be necessary.

Those who were most worried about a development of this sort pointed to many of the governance issues that were identified in the Series 1 conversations. Some indicated that what is really needed are community conversations about what kind of city we want to live in, and what we mean

by “quality of life” and the “common good.” How do we preserve our city’s culture? Should denser developments happen primarily near the city core? What happens to residents who feel the neighborhoods they have worked hard to move in, and stay in, are rapidly changing, and not for the better? They also felt strongly that existing residents needed to be much more informed and involved in decision-making than they are now.



SCENARIO 3

Overall, there seemed to be the least support for this type of development, which might be described best as “sprawl”—large, single-family homes built on large lots on former farming or ranching land. Residents of this hypothetical development would have long commutes to work and grocery stores, and impact fees might not cover all the costs of infrastructure a newly-growing area like this would require.

Participants felt that those most likely to benefit from a development of this sort would be the out-of-state developer, contractors involved in building the homes, and wealthy home buyers from out of state (though no such detail about residents was provided). Some participants argued that these types of developments would also be necessary to meet housing need, and that if people could afford this type of housing and the associated transportation costs, they should be able to. A few also noted that our economic and political system, which privileges private property

rights, gives a lot of decision-making authority to property owners, who may do what they wish (within reason).

Those who were concerned about the development felt that it would be difficult to develop neighborhoods—with amenities such as libraries, parks, and commercial centers—in the area. It would take a lot of investment to connect bike and pedestrian paths to major arterials.

Strong arguments against developments of this sort were also articulated. As was the case with Scenario 2, this scenario seemed to do little to address the housing affordability issue, though it wasn't trying to, either. But the majority of arguments against had to do with environmental impacts—increases in air and water pollution; loss of open space, which provides wildlife habitat; loss of farmland, and therefore potential food production; and vulnerability to wildfire.

Some participants also felt strongly that this sort of development would place a disproportionate burden on taxpayers, who would be subsidizing development and infrastructure for the already-wealthy. They were also concerned about increased traffic throughout the valley as developments like this are built, and with the impact on those who have lived in the area for a long time and who are used to more rural living. In short, they strongly felt that this kind of development went against what they thought of as “livability” in the city. A few online participants who didn't like this Scenario were concerned that the city was actively courting “Californians” and others from out of state to developments of this sort, and that these outsiders don't really care about how fast the quality of life here is changing.

Those who opposed this type of development mentioned again their concerns that Blueprint Boise wasn't being followed; that the tensions between the City of Boise and ACHD would mean traffic issues would only worsen; and they felt strongly that the notification and engagement procedures for this scenario in particular were totally inadequate.

TRADE - OFFS

The three key trade-offs participants seemed to be grappling with included the following:

1) STABILITY V. CHANGE

Boise residents know change is coming—they see it in their own lives now, in the form of increased traffic and construction, rising home prices and rents, and rapid cultural and environmental transformation.

Some of the Series 2 participants welcome change. They are excited about the opportunity to address housing needs with new developments, and are especially enthusiastic about projects that address human well-being. They want to see developers and the city be creative about how the city grows and develops. They welcome the increased cultural opportunities and diversity change could bring, and want to see the city be bold with mass transit projects and low-income housing solutions. They especially want to see more creative, low-income housing solutions, such as micro-apartments and collective living designs. If developments can preserve opportunities to be outside, to be physically active and to foster a sense of neighborhood identity and belonging, they are in support.

But many are also wary of change. They are concerned about outsiders coming in, and the conflicts and competition that might bring. They fear existing residents are being left behind and priced out, and they worry that the city's planning for growth somehow means the city doesn't care for current residents. Yet they want the city to plan for growth. They fear that Boise will end up facing the same problems any big city faces, including increased crime, litter, and conflict. Change may feel frightening and too fast for these residents. Some of these participants would like growth to stop altogether, though they are unclear by which mechanism that could happen.

The common ground for both of these groups is that they want to feel more empowered and engaged around decision making. They both also seem to have a clear mental model of what future is possible (one positive, one negative), so providing both groups with a clear vision of how the positive potential of growth will be maximized, and the potential costs minimized, will be important.

2) INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND DESIRES V. THE “COMMON GOOD”

Participants know there is a significant need for housing in Boise, and that transportation is also a growing problem. They know that many of their fellow residents can't afford places to live. They are worried for their children, their friends and their fellow Boiseans.

But our individual needs and desires can also come up against solutions that might address common problems. This is more than just “NIMBY” v. smart-growth: residents are struggling to navigate complex trade-offs. Some may see the need for more mass transit, for example, but struggle with the idea of increasing tax burdens to pay for it, particularly when the mass transit might not immediately benefit them personally.

Similarly, an individual might want more housing options for the chronically-poor or underserved but has seen housing projects in the past fall into disrepair, be abandoned and affect surrounding values. Such an individual might understandably be wary of how a particular development will be built, and who might live in it.

Perhaps this is why some of the participants found the scenarios “totally unrealistic” while others commented that these were exactly the type of things happening right now. Boiseans don't have a clear picture of what the future holds for Boise, and who will be “winners” and who will be “losers” under that future. They want social problems addressed, but primarily see change through the lens of their everyday lives. It can be difficult to make positive collective decisions when one feels imperiled on an individual level.

Such trade-offs can rarely be resolved on an ideological or theoretical level. They will have to be negotiated project by project. At the same time, residents will need to have a sense of big-picture planning and feel they can trust their government officials to involve them with transparency and consistency in decision-making. Overall, many are struggling to imagine what a positive vision for growth might be.

3) MARKET SOLUTIONS V. GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

Apart from some comments recorded here and there, there was very little discussion of the role of private property rights, and how that plays into what the city can and cannot do in terms of regulating and guiding development. Participants struggled with understanding what role the market plays when compared with what role the city should play.

Some participants noted that all three types of housing explored in the scenarios—and more—will have to be built to meet housing needs. They defended the right of individual property owners to sell their land to developers, or to develop it themselves, and they didn't want to see too much regulation or control exerted by the city.

Others seemed to feel the city could dictate any and all types of development, anywhere and any time, if only they wanted to. These participants may want the city to stop growth altogether, or require only affordable housing be built, or mandate additional taxes or fees, to cover mass transit costs, for example. Online participants especially struggled with these tensions. They wanted more and better jobs, but also wanted the city to stop growing. They wanted more affordable housing, but wanted the city to discourage developers from building. These contradictions often exist side by side, even within the same response.

There is significant confusion, in other words, about what the role of local government is, as compared with the role of the market. How well can the market provide for the common good? Or does it function best in representing individual interests? Where is government over-reach undesirable? Where would we like government to be more involved and forceful? What does the law say?

Some participants requested more information about the “tools” available to the city as it moves forward. Educating and communicating with residents about what is and isn't possible with regard to development and transportation—and how these tools can be used to accomplish the vision the city has for the future—will be an important next step.

TABLE #1

SCENARIO #3

Q#1: WHO WINS?

- DEVELOPER
- BUILDERS
- ACHD EMPLOYEES
- LAND OWNER
- CITY - TAX REV. GENERATION
- SCHOOLS
- NEAREST GROCERY STORE
- POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPERS + BUSINESSES

Q#3: CONCERNS

- TRANSIT
- ENVIRONMENT
- DEMAND OF PEOPLE LIVING THAT FAR OUT AT THAT PRICE POINT - NOT
- SENSE OF PLACE
- DEVELOPMENT TO FIT WITH BU

Q#2: WHO LOSES?

- TAXPAYER
- WILD LIFE
- ENVIRONMENTALISTS
- LOCAL FARMERS, CSAS, PEOPLE WHO GAT
- CITY LOSES BC OF SIZE OF DEVELOP
- EXISTING NEIGHBORS - OUT OF G DEVELOPER DIES KNOW NEIGH OR NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER
- ENVIRONMENT + ANYONE WHO ON IT

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Five themes therefore emerged as areas of cross-cutting concern or confusion for participants:

1. the definition of “affordable housing”
2. the need for improved public engagement
3. fear about cultural change
4. confusion about the city’s role
5. confusion and concern about the comprehensive plan

1) DEFINING “AFFORDABLE HOUSING”

Mental models of what is meant by “affordable housing” vary widely. Some assume this means housing primarily for the homeless or very poor; others assume it means rent stabilization; and still others assume it means keeping things affordable for the existing middle class. For example, the two scenarios that had some affordable housing mixed in with market-rate housing were confusing for many participants, perhaps because they imagine affordable housing as primarily consisting of stand-alone developments.

In addition, some participants felt the scenarios were unrealistic because so little affordable housing is being built in the city, or because subsidies are hard to take advantage of—affordable housing will not be easily solved. Conversely, others who believe the problem is primarily a lack of low-income housing were frustrated that the scenarios did not include more options for including low-income housing.

Concerns about class differences also permeated conversations of the three scenarios. For example, those who are worried primarily about existing residents being priced out of rentals and homeownership fear the city is accommodating wealthy new residents. At the same time, many have fears about apartment complex-type housing developments, and associate these with a “permanent rental class” who care less about neighborhood culture, pride of ownership, crime, noise and cleanliness. Some will be tempted to see notes of xenophobia and classism in such responses.

And, as was noted above, there is widespread confusion about what the city can do to intervene in the market (e.g., what developers have a right to do, what the city has an obligation to do, what the city cannot do) when it comes to housing costs.

2) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

As was the case with Series 1 participants, Series 2 participants want more information, and earlier. They want to feel they are being meaningfully consulted and heard. They would like Community Conversations to continue, in different forms and locations and with “deeper-dives” into areas of concern.

Overall, they feel that developers cannot be trusted (or are not trained) to do a good job of engagement. Notification processes are inadequate, and it is difficult to engage people unless a particular project involves them in some way, at which point they may already be reacting against the proposed project.

3) FEARS ABOUT CULTURAL CHANGE

When considering new housing developments, some participants are excited about what change may bring. Many are not. Participants seemed to disagree widely on the ways new developments change the culture of existing neighborhoods. Do they bring needed diversity and vitality? Or increasing noise and aggravation?

Participants also wondered how much input they really had into new developments. What if a development isn't aesthetically appropriate to the neighborhood? What if it includes no green space for the future residents of the development? What if nearby bike lanes are not safe? Do existing neighborhoods have opportunities to provide input into these changes? Will developers listen? Or do developers receive “sweetheart deals” from city officials willing to look the other way? Some are convinced this is the case.

Participants also seem to want the city to intervene in maintaining the small-town feel of the city. They wanted to know about who would be moving into developments, including their class status, for example. This

poses a challenge: Can the city do more to preserve the culture of existing neighborhoods? Or will this be seen as an effort to keep things culturally homogeneous, which could have a chilling effect on new residents? Can diversity be celebrated, and neighborhood cultures preserved? Or will we go down the path of creating increasingly homogeneous neighborhoods, as so many other cities have?

4) THE CITY'S SPHERE OF CONTROL

Participants seemed to have widely varying knowledge regarding which tools the city has at its disposal to address growth. They also wonder: What additional tools does it need? How can it get these tools? And what actions can the city not take, and why?



5) COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Though many participants mentioned the comprehensive plan, known as Blueprint Boise, they seemed to have divergent understandings of what it contains, and of its power to dictate development. There are also disagreements about whether Blueprint Boise should be revised, and about whether it is currently being followed, and when it isn't.

Above all, participants don't seem to have a clear sense of how Blueprint Boise sets a vision for the future.

Some may intellectually grasp the future it lays out, but many struggle to visualize and imagine what lies ahead. In the absence of this vision, fear may take over.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) TAKE THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Comment cards and other feedback suggest that Boise residents want community conversations and other meetings to continue. But they are also worried that participants in meetings aren't diverse enough, and that the city's message isn't getting out. They want more of their fellow residents involved.

To that end, the city could consider developing a traveling presentation addressing some of the themes and areas of confusion raised in this report. The presentation could be made to neighborhood associations and other cultural and business groups. It could target those who might not normally be inclined or able to attend public meetings. It could happen in languages other than English.

The content could address common myths or misconceptions—perhaps around Blueprint Boise in particular, but should also clearly communicate a vision for the city, akin to what the Mayor outlined in the 2018 State of the City address. This presentation could also address what tools are available to the city as it seeks to address growth, and which aren't.

Regardless what it includes, they should go beyond a question and answer session to include opportunities for dialogue and deliberation. Listening is particularly important, as is continually demonstrating that aggregate community feedback is leading to real change.

Another option might be to host a series of “planning cafes” around the city, where an expert in planning, housing, transportation, preservation, governance or another theme gives a brief presentation, and then answers questions from the audience. This would provide opportunities for relationship building, education and communication, and would help the city keep its finger on the pulse of neighborhood and resident concerns.

2) FURTHER INSTITUTIONALIZE ENGAGEMENT

The city should also continue to invest in institutionalizing resident input into growth-related issues long-term. Unlike the traveling roadshow, institutionalizing engagement would mean figuring out ways to permanently consult residents on growth-related issues. Perhaps this will be a program similar to the LIV ambassador program, or could involve convening

neighborhood associations periodically, on a predictable schedule, for listening and feedback sessions. Community Conversations have received a lot of positive feedback, if not in terms of content, then process. The city should not waste this momentum.

3) DEVELOP CREATIVE, USER-FRIENDLY INFORMATION TOOLS FOR RESIDENTS

At the end of one of the Series 2 conversations, one participant recommended that the city create an interactive, online map that features proposed/active developments, with links to further details for each. This kind of idea—developed in concert with neighborhood associations and other key stakeholders, as users—could be useful, in addition to the development of the two-way dialogue mechanisms proposed in #1 and #2. At the very least, the city should experiment with novel, accessible, interactive ways to visualize and share complex planning and development information with groups of interested residents. This resident-oriented decision support could also help mitigate the perception that development decisions are being made behind closed doors.

4) INVOLVE RENTERS

Renters are a key group of stakeholders needing to be involved in discussions around growth and policymaking. They often do not receive as much attention as homeowners, but their concerns are significant, and they are growing. Special efforts should be made to develop relationships with renters, and perhaps to develop focused programs around the issues they face. Investing in positive relationships with renters may also help alleviate the concerns of those who fear that rental developments may fall into disrepair and lead to blight. If renters are treated well, and problems are solved quickly, all are likely to benefit.

5) ADDRESS AND COMMUNICATE REGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS

Many of the participants at both series of Community Conversations feel that regional planning is not happening in the Treasure Valley. If it is happening, it's not being widely communicated. If it's not happening, barriers and opportunities should be articulated. Residents expect a clear plan moving forward, and want local governments and agencies to cooperate to solve problems.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1



SCENARIO 1: APARTMENT COMPLEX

OVERVIEW

This 100-unit apartment complex is proposed in a neighborhood within a five-minute drive from downtown.

NEIGHBORHOOD



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



NEIGHBORHOOD

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primarily single-family homes.• Some smaller apartment complexes.• Many historic homes, some large, some modest. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly walkable neighborhood.• Grocery store within a ten-minute walk.• Local schools have limited capacity for new students. |
|--|---|

TRANSPORTATION

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project would be located along a bus route with 30-minute frequency.• Significant bike infrastructure.• Average drive commute time is 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">minutes.• The project would generate an additional 60 vehicle trips during the morning and evening commute times. |
|---|--|

APPENDIX 1

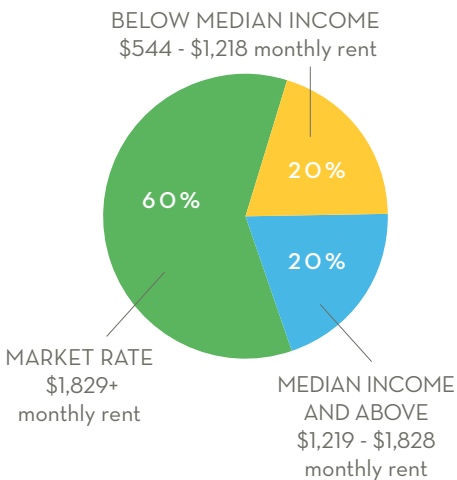


SCENARIO 1: APARTMENT COMPLEX

PROJECT DETAILS



- Four stories tall (two stories higher than surrounding neighborhood).
- The apartments would be for rent.
- 25 of the units have two on-site parking spaces per unit.
- The remaining 75 units have one on-site parking space per unit.
- Estimated 160 residents.
- Apartment breakdown:



DEVELOPMENT DETAILS



Developer: Shoshone Properties

- Property is owned by developer.
- The site currently has a vacant commercial building on it.
- The developer will be required to pay fire, police, parks and highway impact fees to cover the increased service levels the project will bring to the neighborhood.
- The City of Boise and developer followed the standard public notification process. Please see Development Review Process handout for additional detail.
- Immediately after the project was announced, neighbors created a Facebook page in opposition. Their concerns:
 - High density doesn't fit the neighborhood.
 - Height of the project will affect views for neighboring houses.
 - City prioritizes developer needs over neighborhood concerns.

APPENDIX 1



SCENARIO 2: SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES + TOWNHOUSES

OVERVIEW

60 single-family houses and 40 townhouses are proposed in a semi-suburban, semi-rural neighborhood within a 15-minute drive from downtown.

NEIGHBORHOOD



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



NEIGHBORHOOD

- Historically middle-class neighborhood with occasional horse pasture or legacy farmland.
- Recently, denser developments have been approved.

- Grocery store within 10 to 15 minute drive.
- Local schools have capacity for new students.

TRANSPORTATION

- Residents living in the area are primarily automobile-dependent.
- No regular access to buses.
- Bike infrastructure is rare.

- Average drive commute time is 15 minutes.
- The project would generate an additional 90 vehicle trips during the morning and evening commute times.

APPENDIX 1



SCENARIO 2: SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES + TOWNHOUSES

PROJECT DETAILS



SINGLE-FAMILY UNITS

SIZE: 2,000 – 4,000 square feet

PRICE: \$250,000 - \$450,000

PARKING: Two-car garage for each unit



TOWNHOUSES

SIZE: 1,300 – 2,500 square feet

PRICE: \$190,000 - \$420,000

PARKING: One on-site space per unit

MEDIAN INCOME HOUSING

SIZE: 10 of the 40 townhouses are priced for rental by median income residents

PRICE: Available to rent for families with a combined income of \$56,251 - \$84,360

PARKING: One on-site space per unit

DEVELOPMENT DETAILS



Developer: Latah Development

- Property is owned by developer.
- Property is currently open space, former farmland.
- The developer will be required to pay fire, police, parks and highway impact fees to cover increased service levels the project will bring to the area.
- The City of Boise and developer followed the standard public notification process. Please see Development Review Process handout for additional detail.
- The development has gathered significant opposition from the neighbors. Their concerns include:
 - Loss of potential farmland.
 - Increased density doesn't fit the neighborhood character.

APPENDIX 1



SCENARIO 3: SINGLE-FAMILY ONLY

OVERVIEW

100 single-family detached homes in undeveloped open space along the fringe of Boise. Historically the area has been open farmland or ranchland.

NEIGHBORHOOD



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



NEIGHBORHOOD

- Homes used to be few and far between, on large lots.
- Area has pockets of suburban homes.
- Recently, larger conventional single-family developments have begun to be approved.

- The nearest grocery store is a 15-20 minute drive away.
- Local schools have capacity for new students.

TRANSPORTATION

- Residents living in the area are more automobile-dependent.
- No regular access to buses.
- Bike infrastructure is rare.

- Average drive commute time is 25 minutes.
- The project would generate an additional 100 vehicle trips during the morning and evening commute times.



SCENARIO 3: SINGLE-FAMILY ONLY

PROJECT DETAILS



SINGLE-FAMILY UNITS

SIZE: 2,200 – 4,000 square feet

PRICE: \$350,000 - \$700,000

- Homes would not be within range for middle income families or those with lower incomes.
- 40-acre parcel.
- Semi-rural area with larger, typically quarter-acre lots.

DEVELOPMENT DETAILS



Developer: Cascade Builders

- Property is owned by out-of-state land owner who has hired a local developer.
- The area is currently open space.
- The developer will be required to pay fire, police, parks and highway impact fees to cover the increased service levels the project will bring. If development continues in the area, a new fire station will need to be built. Impact fees will cover the cost of construction, but the ongoing station operations costs will be paid by taxpayers.
- The City of Boise and developer followed the standard public notification process. Please see Development Review Process handout for additional detail.
- Loss of open space has activated the environmental community to lobby the city to deny approval.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Below is a snapshot of the current median incomes and the corresponding maximum housing affordability for an individual and a family of four living in Boise.

CURRENT MEDIAN INCOME IN BOISE



SINGLE PERSON: \$49,250

- Can afford maximum rental of \$1,231
- Can afford maximum home purchase of \$147,750*



FAMILY OF FOUR: \$70,300

- Can afford maximum rental of \$1,757
- Can afford maximum home purchase of \$210,900*

*Based on Median Multiple rating for affordability



HOUSING CONTEXT

Below is a snapshot of the anticipated growth in the City of Boise over the next 20 years and the housing needs that will result from this growth.

Next 20 years:



Source: COMPASS Communities in Motion 2040 Plan, 2014; City of Boise 2015 Housing Needs Analysis

APPENDIX 3 - COMMENT CARDS

PROCESS	# OF DOTS
General positive comments (thank you, happy to be involved, well organized, good facilitators, felt heard, good discussions).	67
Wanted more time for (open) discussion.	18
Want more sessions/meetings.	16
Involve more diverse participants (e.g., ethnicity, age--need more young people--disabled, etc.). Some tables had privileged folks only.	12
Need more info about city processes and in-migration: moratoriums, population data, incomes, laws, what's involved in building affordable housing, zoning, Blueprint Boise.	12
What happens next? What will be done with what comes out of these conversations? How do we know the city is listening?	11
Get more residents involved--get the word out better.	5
Would have liked to have more information ahead of time.	4
Make sure everyone at table is introduced and gets a chance to speak: some people should have been more limited in terms of speaking time.	3
Hard to hear.	2
Participants should have had discussion questions.	1
Some participants misinformed.	1
Wanted more structure at tables to stay on track.	1
Have an online forum for those who can't attend.	1
Would have preferred a deeper dive into details.	1
TOTAL	155

APPENDIX 3 - COMMENT CARDS

CONTENT	# OF DOTS
Needed to better address affordable housing: scenarios were for mid-to upper-level housing	16
Meeting should have been focused more on four areas highlighted at last meeting.	10
Scenarios missing some more creative ideas (smaller homes, around 1000 sq ft., or requiring developers to build daycares); greenspace requirements; etc.	7
More focus on trade-offs (e.g., needing affordable housing v. NIMBYism)	4
More discussion of environmental issues.	3
Needed to know exactly where buildings in scenarios would be proposed; wanted more facts/info about scenarios.	2
Scenarios should have paid more attention to the unique character of Boise.	2
Density is best.	2
Clarify differences between types of developers (for-profit, non-profit)	1
Cover what was learned in the previous sessions.	1
Discuss private property rights.	1
More discussion on infill affecting particular neighborhoods.	1
More substance.	1
Focus on how to stop the growth.	1
Choose different scenarios.	1
Wages.	1
Wanted more information about transportation, commute times, etc.	1
Didn't cover current residents and how they're affected.	1
High density has done more harm than good in Boise.	1
Scenarios didn't follow Blueprint Boise.	1
TOTAL	57

APPENDIX 3 - COMMENT CARDS

PARTICIPANT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	# OF DOTS
Slow down. Prioritize housing and transit, not auxiliary projects (e.g., library, stadiums).	4
Engage residents more meaningfully, and more often. Think about how to engage renters and those priced out of the city.	4
The Planning community needs to recapture narrative around growth in the city (what is being done, what the plans are)--media not doing a good job.	2
City must follow Blueprint Boise.	2
We need much more affordable housing, like with downtown infill.	2
Notification is easy to solve if you want to.	2
Develop a comprehensive green space plan--e.g., make every canal have a greenbelt path.	2
Don't let developers drive the revision of Blueprint Boise.	2
Create an online, interactive website with information about proposed and active developments.	1
City needs representatives at ACHD.	1
City economic development reps should be part of PDS pre-application meeting.	1
City needs to be more proactive in building better codes.	1
City should update Blueprint Boise	1
Transportation planning needs to be for 20 years out, not for today's population.	1
Emergency ordinances work: put affordable housing as a goal into Blueprint Boise and factor it into every decision.	1
Stop promoting growth and the city.	1
Preserve the affordable housing that exists now, e.g., Rezone the Blue Valley Mobile Home Park to "residential."	1
City needs "gadfly" (policy entrepreneur?) who will move creative ideas forward.	1
The city is an unpredictable and difficult place to do business, which encourages growth elsewhere.	1
TOTAL	31

APPENDIX 3 - COMMENT CARDS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS	# OF DOTS
Involve neighborhood associations.	3
Discuss tax implications: exemptions, property taxes, local control.	3
Have a community conversation about culture and interaction.	2
Hold smaller meetings in neighborhoods to improve diversity of participation.	2
Cover tools: what the city can and cannot do regarding these issues; solutions.	2
Consider focusing discussions in particular areas of the city.	1
Have a Q&A with an actual developer next time.	1
Cover what actual plans are in the works?	1
Host discussions with smaller groups.	1
Renter's rights and property management	1
How do we get more funding for transportation?	1
Get more granular with future workshops on particular issues.	1
Discuss environmental issues related to growth.	1
What kinds of jobs/industries do we want moving forward?	1
How can the City communicate better with citizens?	1
Consider developing YouTube tutorials that explain P&Z and other city regulations.	1
Correct common misconceptions and myths.	1
Introduce some design thinking to begin to come up with solutions.	1
TOTAL	25



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. Schneider'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).