

December 23, 2022

Tim Keane  
Director of City Planning  
City of Boise  
150 N Capitol Blvd  
Boise, ID 83702



### **Re: Zoning Code Rewrite**

Thank you for your dedication to the Zoning Code Rewrite process, and for encouraging community participation along the way. This effort was due, and we appreciate the level of importance the City has placed on the process. The outcome will impact the community for decades to come, and it's worthy of a careful, thoughtful approach.

The NENA Board and NENA Planning & Zoning Committee have reviewed the rewrite, and would like to share our thoughts on a few specific areas. Our review was primarily focused on the zone with the greatest impact on the North End, that being R1-C.

- Our primary concern is with the modified notification system. Many of the new allowable uses are reasonable within a neighborhood like ours, but they are a dramatic departure from what has been allowed previously. For these new uses, we ask not for new or more strenuous review tracks (or "Types"), but instead a simple level of notification to nearby neighbors.

We understand that neighborhood associations will still receive notice, but adequately notifying residents and businesses of all planning applications is a cumbersome task for our volunteer organization. In fact, not all residents, businesses, etc. within the North End are NENA members, being that we are an opt-in association. For applications that are changing the existing use, even if the change is to an allowed use/allowed form, we ask that a basic level of notification occurs.

- Having closely reviewed the residential use types, we are worried that the code uniquely favors single-family attached and detached products over the "missing middle" variety. Single-family has no height transition standard, no floor area limitation, and more relaxed parking standards. We feel that a single-family home, when taking advantage of these relaxed requirements, could be just as impactful as a triplex or fourplex. Also, this means the market will be more inclined to build much larger and likely less affordable single-family homes, rather than the higher-density and incentive-based products.

As such, we ask that single-family dwellings be held to the same (or similar) use-specific standards as dwellings with increased density. If that direction is taken and the Floor Area Ratio element is applied, we also ask that you evaluate the mechanics of the current FAR system. For example, .55% may not be the right amount. Also, we feel the City should seriously consider a unique calculation or exclusion for partial or fully below grade space for FAR.

- Retail and restaurant uses must follow very prescriptive use-specific standards. This provides predictability, but immediately rules out a variety of locations that may naturally evolve into a great location for these uses. There are certainly locations that aren't on corners that are ideally suited for small-scale retail and restaurant uses. To accomplish this, we ask that either a notification model exists, or a conditional use process, that enables a less prescriptive approach. If conditional use is possible, we even support an expansion to the uses. For example, bars and taverns could fit well in some neighborhood locations, with specific conditions in place.
- We encourage the City to invest resources into the creation of "Citizen Guides" to improve the understanding of this code, including graphic representations of the policies. Much of the existing public concern could potentially be assuaged if it were visually articulated how these uses were permitted.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of these suggestions.

Sincerely,

The 2022/2023 North End Neighborhood Association Board

6 out of 7 current board members voted to issue this letter with one against (density concerns)



Erik Hagen, AIA, NENA President and Planning & Zoning Chair

Drew Alexander, NENA Vice President, Planner and City Wide Advisory Committee member

cc: NENA Board@NorthEndBoise.org, jszelag@cityofboise.org (Deputy Planning Director), ATuning@cityofboise.org (Comprehensive Planner), lwalker@cityofboise.org (Comprehensive Planner), ddupuy@cityofboise.org (City Design Manager), lmoser@cityofboise.org (Communications Manager)