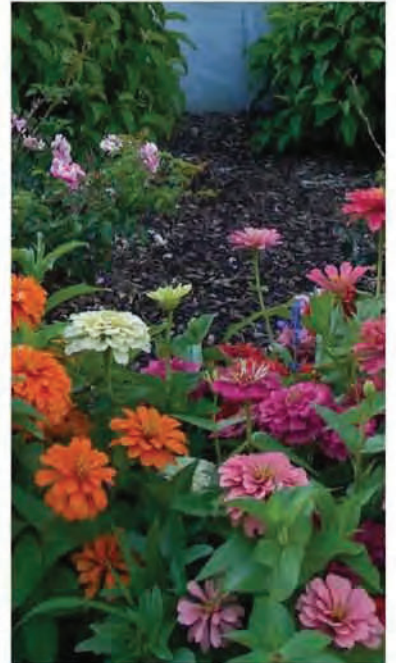


APPENDIX A: TRENDS & FORCES REPORT

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**Ada County 2025**
Collaborate.
Innovate.
Thrive.

Ada County 2025

Trends & Forces



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

ABOUT ADA COUNTY 2025

The Ada County 2025 process represents a collaborative and innovative county-wide planning effort led by Ada County to update the Ada County Comprehensive Plan, last updated in 2007. As part of the Ada County 2025 process, the County will also be developing a Strategic Business Plan that establishes a vision and future direction for Ada County as an organization and service provider and helps inform the updated Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the County will be developing a new strategy to guide and help prioritize future capital investments. The updated Comprehensive Plan will serve as a policy guide for the growth and physical development of Ada County over the next ten years. This update will be a collaborative and inclusive process in which all citizens and stakeholders are encouraged to participate!

Learn more about Ada County 2025 by visiting the project's website: www.adacounty2025.com.

ABOUT THE TRENDS AND FORCES REPORT

The purpose of this report is to identify major trends and key issues affecting Ada County and its cities. Specifically, this report provides an overview of key demographic, social, economic, and other trends and highlights key issues, opportunities, and constraints to be considered as part of the Ada County 2025 process. The report is intended to help inform and serve as a foundation for discussion among Ada County's diverse stakeholders and community at large during subsequent phases of the process.

RELATED PLANS AND REPORTS

Additional information about the topics discussed in this report can be found in a variety of plans and reports authored by Ada County and other local agencies and organizations. These include:

- [Ada County Comprehensive Plan \(Ada County, 2007\)](#)
- [Ada County Hazard Vulnerability Analysis \(Ada County, 2010\)](#)
- [Ada County All Hazard Mitigation Plan \(Ada County, 2011\)](#)
- [Ada County Parks and Open Space Master Plan \(Ada County, 2007\)](#)
- [Ada County Open Space Advisory Task Force Findings and Recommendations \(Ada County, 2008\)](#)
- [Communities in Motion 2040 \(COMPASS, 2014\)](#)
- [Proposed Treasure Valley Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan \(Idaho Water Resource Board, 2012\)](#)
- [Preservation Plan for Cultural and Historic Resources \(Ada County Historic Preservation Council, 2006\)](#)



GOVERNANCE

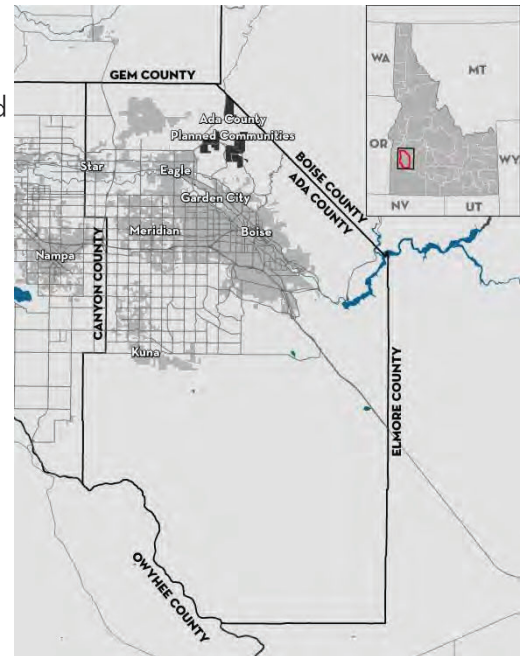
ADA COUNTY COURTHOUSE
AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
200 WEST FRONT STREET

GOVERNANCE

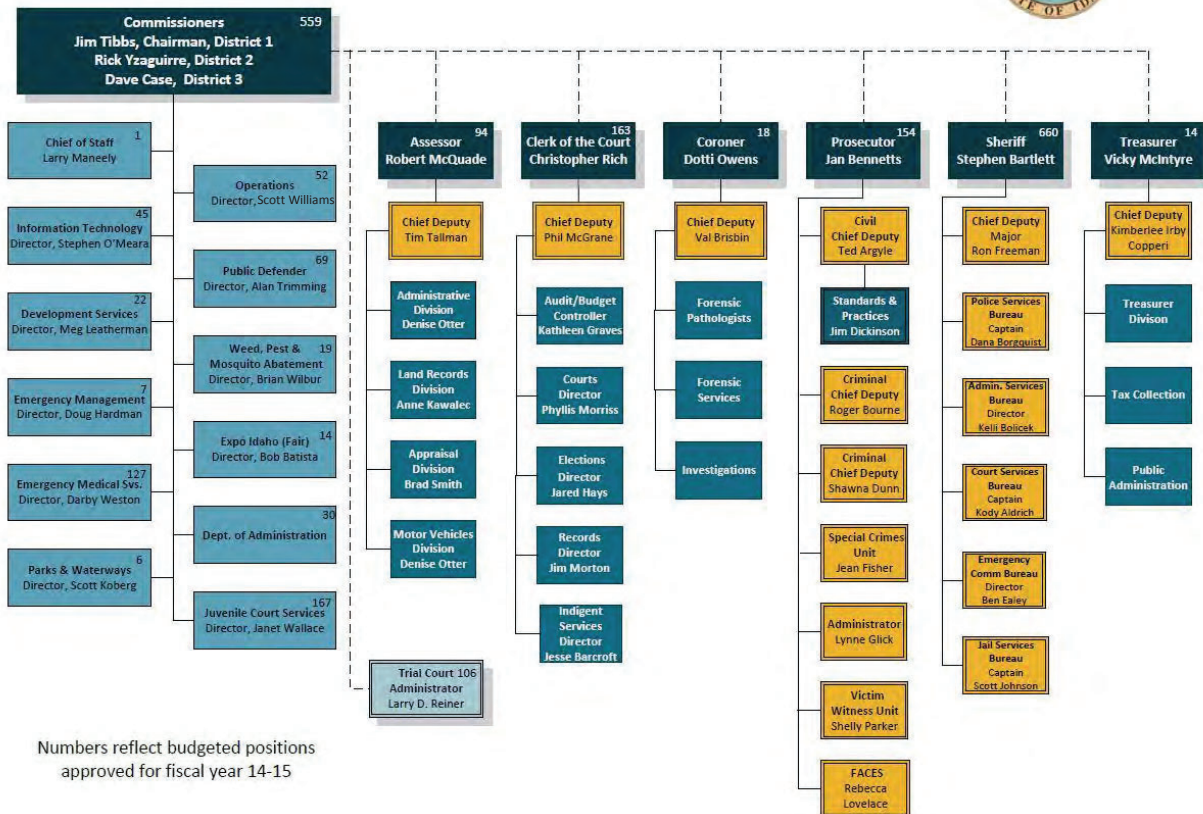
ADA COUNTY

Jurisdiction

- **Location and size:** Ada County is located in southwest Idaho, and covers an area of approximately 1,060 square miles.
- **Land Ownership:** A little over half of the County is owned or managed by state and federal government agencies, primarily the Bureau of Land Management (or BLM).
- **Residency:** Every person in Ada County is a resident of Ada County, even if they also happen to live within one of the County's six cities.
- **Representation:** Residents of Ada County are represented by nine elected officials. The Board of County Commissioners is the primary decision-making body in the County, and is made up of three Commissioners representing different districts in the County. Other elected officials in the County include the Assessor, the Clerk of the Court, the Coroner, the County Prosecutor, the Sheriff, and the Treasurer.



ADA COUNTY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



CITIES

- **Cities:** There are currently six municipalities within Ada County: the City of Boise, the City of Meridian, the City of Eagle, the City of Kuna, the City of Garden City and the City of Star. Residents of these six cities are also residents of Ada County even though they live within a city.
- **Shared Services:** Ada County is responsible for providing residents of these cities with services, both those mandated by the constitution of the State of Idaho to provide and those the County elects to provide. Furthermore, many of the cities contract with Ada County for certain services, such as law enforcement (County Sheriff) and emergency services.
- **Land Use Planning:** City governments have many of their own responsibilities, including land use planning. Land use plans within the Areas of City impact are negotiated between the County and each city in the County; the final result being adoption of the land use plan and its implementation by the County.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Ada County Highway District

- **Responsibilities:** The Ada County Highway District is responsible for all short-range planning, construction, maintenance, and operations of urban streets, rural roads (excluding Interstate, US, and state highways), and bridges in Ada County.
- **Jurisdiction:** ACHD is an independent government agency established by a voter referendum in 1972. Its jurisdiction includes Boise, Eagle, Garden City, Kuna, Meridian, and Star, as well as the unincorporated areas of Ada County.
- **Governance:** ACHD is governed by an independently elected board, each representing sub-districts in the County.

Valley Regional Transit

- **Responsibility and Jurisdiction:** Public transportation services in Ada County are the responsibility of Valley Regional Transit (or VRT). VRT's jurisdiction includes all of Ada County as well as Canyon County.
- **Services:** VRT provides local bus service in Boise and Garden City, as well as inter-county services between the cities of Meridian, Star and Eagle (as well as Middleton in Canyon County).

COMPASS

- **Responsibility:** A third entity in Ada County, the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (or COMPASS) is also responsible for transportation planning within Ada County.

- **Function and Services:** Focusing on long-range planning, COMPASS serves as Ada County’s and Canyon County’s metropolitan planning organization (or MPO), as well as providing member governments with advice and/or technical services related to a host of planning and transportation issues.
- **Long-Range Planning:** COMPASS develops its own long-range transportation plan, known as *Communities in Motion 2040*, which directs where and how federal transportation funds should be spent.



ADA COUNTY CO

ADA COUNTY COURTHOUSE
AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
200 WEST FRONT STREET

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Impact:** While Ada County is quite large, the land use policies of the Comprehensive Plan will only apply to around 30% of the County's total area, as roughly 50% of the County is managed by state and federal agencies and 20% is within the Areas of City Impact of the County's six cities.
- **All residents matter:** Although most County residents live in one of the six cities (Boise, Meridian, Eagle, Kuna, Garden City, and Star), they are still residents of Ada County, and play a role in the process to update the Ada County Comprehensive Plan.
- **Integrating Existing Plans and Policies:** Transportation and land use planning in Ada County is divided up among many different organizations, including Ada County, its cities, and regional organizations like COMPASS. It will be important that the Ada County Comprehensive Plan account for and integrate key ideas from other agencies and plans, such as *Communities in Motion 2040* or municipal comprehensive plans, where appropriate.

POPULATION

POPULATION

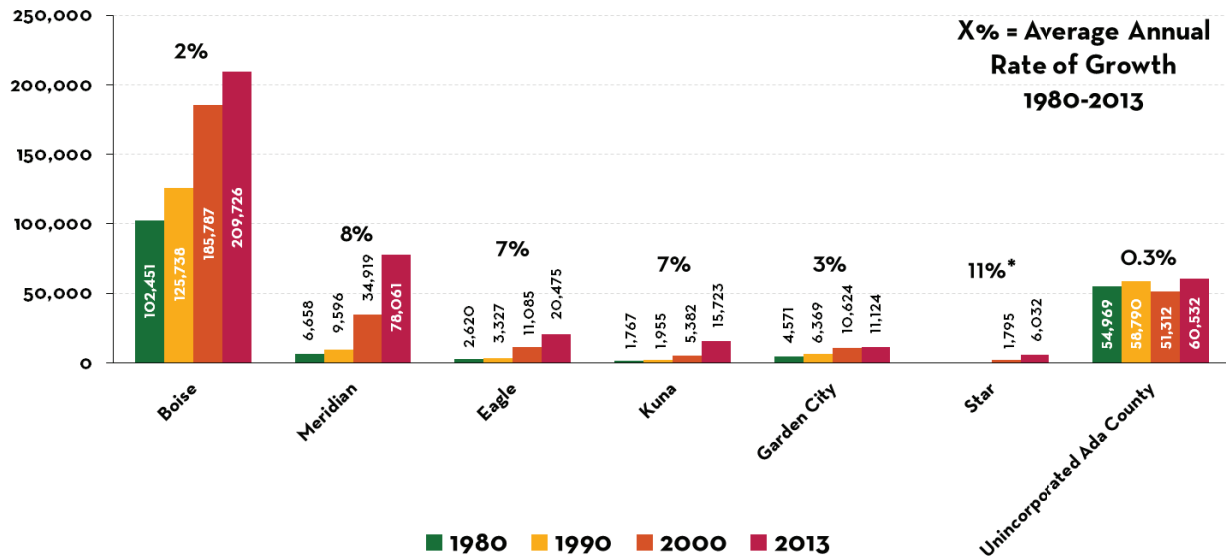
POPULATION OF ADA COUNTY AND ITS CITIES		
LOCATION	2013	% OF COUNTY POP
Boise	209,726	52%
Meridian	78,061	19%
Eagle	20,475	5%
Kuna	15,723	4%
Garden City	11,124	3%
Star	6,032	2%
Unincorporated Ada County	60,532	15%
ADA COUNTY	401,673	100%

Source: US Census Bureau

CURRENT POPULATION

- Total Population:** Ada County had an estimated population of 401,673 residents in 2013. This accounted for around 25% of the State of Idaho’s population of 1,583,364 that same year. According to the US Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program (which uses a different methodology than the American Community Survey), Ada County’s population reached 426,236 residents as of July 1, 2014.
- Where Residents Live:** The majority of County residents (85% of the total) lived in one of the County’s six cities in 2013. The City of Boise, the state capital and county seat, had the largest population with 209,726 residents, over half (52%) of Ada County’s total population. The next largest city was the City of Meridian, with 78,061 residents, followed by Eagle (20,475 residents), Kuna (15,723 residents), Garden City (11,124 residents), and Star (6,032). If unincorporated Ada County is included, it would be the third largest jurisdiction in the County (with approximately 60,532 residents).

POPULATION OF ADA COUNTY - 1980-2013, BY JURISDICTION



Only includes portion of cities in Ada County

*City of Star was incorporated in 1997, rate of growth calculated for period 2000-2013

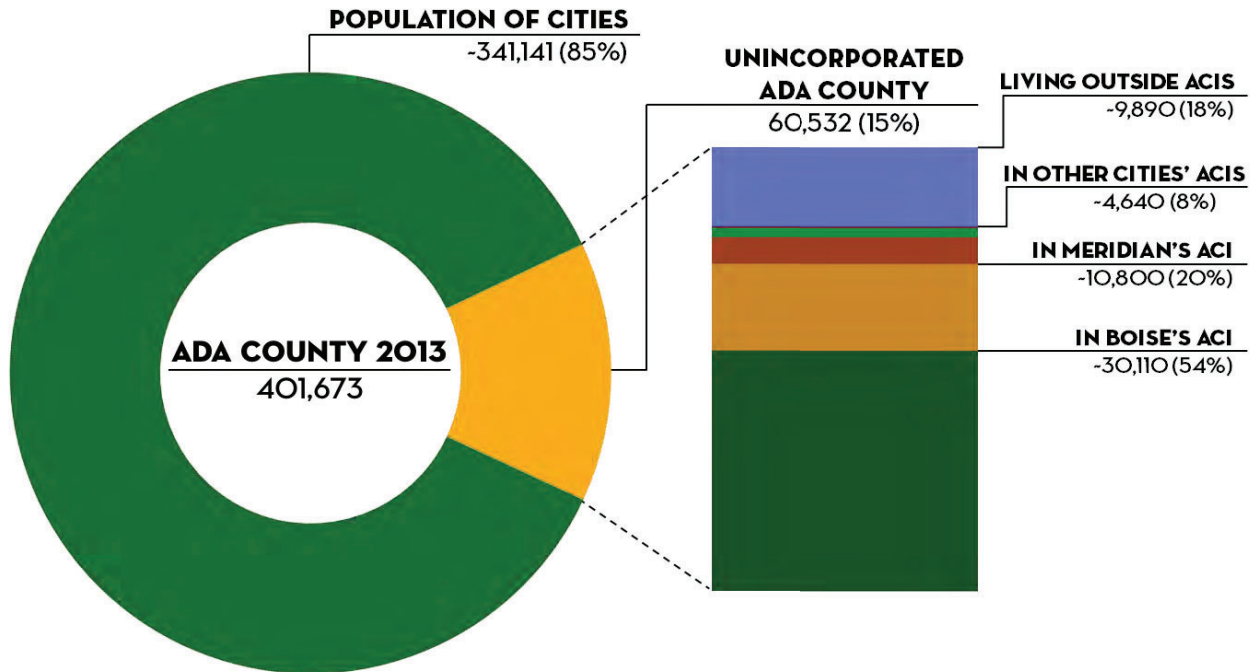
Source: US Census Bureau; National Historical GIS (NHGIS)

GROWTH AND TRENDS

Growth Since 1980

- Above Average Growth:** Between 1980 and 2013, the population of Ada County grew by approximately 228,637 people, more than doubling the 1980 population of 173,036. The average annual growth rate over this same period was 3%, faster than the average annual rate of 1.6% for the State of Idaho over the same period.
- Location of Growth:** Most growth occurred within the County’s cities, which together grew at an average annual rate of 3.4% between 1980 and 2013, faster than the rate for the County as a whole (3%).
- Growth in the Cities:** Among Ada County’s cities, the City of Boise saw the largest amount of total population growth, adding 107,275 people between 1980 and 2013. However, other cities in the County grew at a faster rate than Boise over this same period. The City of Meridian, for example, grew at an average annual rate of 8%.
- Growth in Unincorporated Ada County:** Growth in unincorporated Ada County was much slower than in incorporated areas, growing at an annual rate of 0.3% between 1980 and 2013. However, this low growth had more to do with changing city boundaries than a lack of overall population growth in the unincorporated County.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN ADA COUNTY, 2013



Note: ACI figures are based on TAZ boundaries and do not align exactly with municipal and ACI boundaries

Source: US Census Bureau; COMPASS

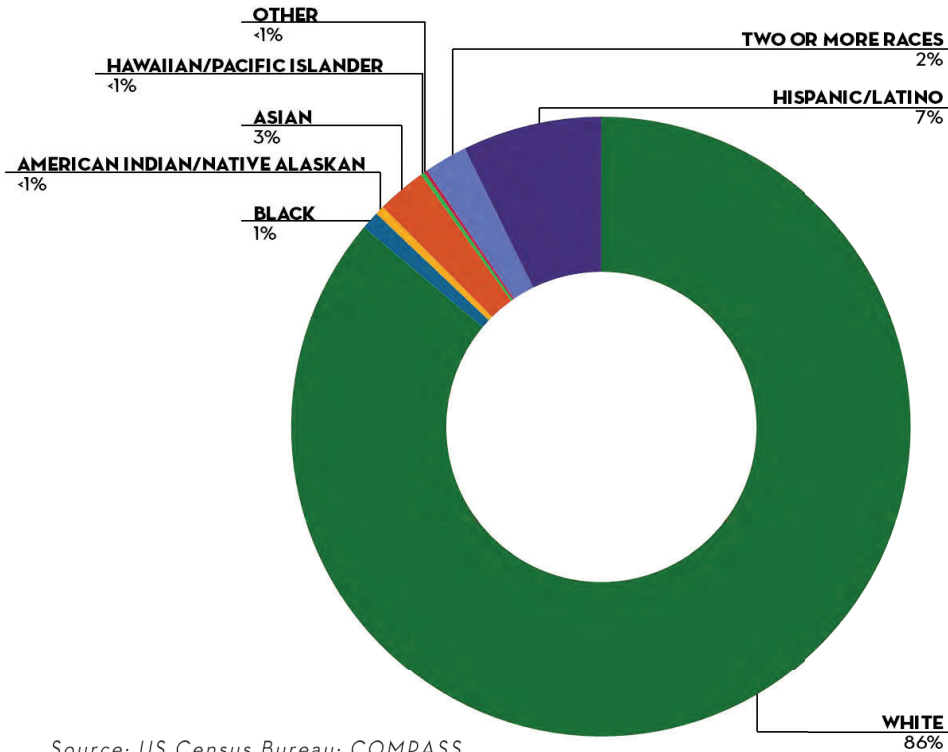
Population in the Unincorporated County

- **Population:** Only 60,532 (or 15% of Ada County's 401,673 residents) lived in the unincorporated areas of the County in 2013.
- **Within a City's ACI:** Of those living in unincorporated areas of Ada County, 82% lived within a city's Area of City Influence (or ACI). Over half lived within Boise's ACI, and another 20% lived in Meridian's ACI, with another 8% living in the ACIs of Eagle, Kuna, Garden City, and Star.
- **Outside the ACIs:** Only 18% of people living in unincorporated areas (approx. 9,900) of the County live outside of an ACI, mainly those living in one of the County's four Planned Communities. In all, only around 2.5% of the County's population lived in unincorporated areas outside of the cities' ACIs in 2013.

Projected Growth

- **Projected Population:** By 2040, COMPASS predicts that Ada County will grow by approximately 270,000 residents, to a population of around 674,000. Almost three-quarters of this growth will occur in the cities, while 27% of this growth will occur in unincorporated Ada County.
- **Location of Future Growth:** Compared to the cities, unincorporated Ada County is forecast to see the largest population increase by 2040, roughly 70,000 new residents compared to 64,500 in Boise, the next largest population increase. However, it is unclear whether this growth will occur in the ACIs, in which case this distribution will likely to change as the cities continue to annex lands within their ACIs.
- **Growth Rates:** The annual rate of growth in the County as a whole should slow from 3% between 1980 and 2013 to 2% between 2013 and 2040. Slowing rates of growth should be seen across all of the cities, however, unincorporated Ada County will see annual rates of growth increase from 0.3% between 1980 and 2013 to 3% between 2013 and 2040 (although it is uncertain whether this growth will be within a city's ACI and thus likely to be annexed).

**POPULATION OF ADA COUNTY 2013,
BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

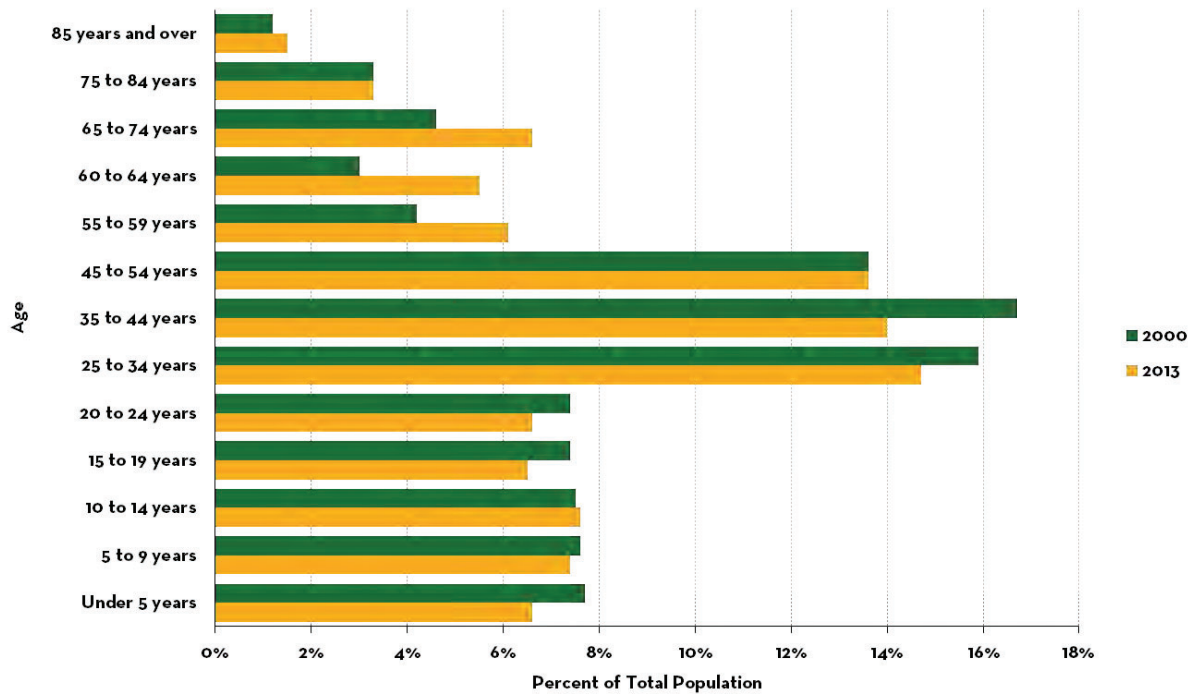


Source: US Census Bureau; COMPASS

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- Racial/Ethnic Composition:** The overall racial and ethnic composition of Ada County is very similar to that of its individual cities. Non-Hispanic Whites accounted for the largest racial group in the County in 2013, or 86% of Ada County’s population in 2013, and ranged between 90% of the population in Eagle to 83% of the population in Garden City. This is similar to the state as a whole, in which 83.7% of the population was White in 2013.
- Hispanic and Latinos:** The largest non-White minority group in Ada County in 2013 were Hispanics and Latinos, accounting for 7% of the County’s population (and ranging from 13% of the population of Garden City to 4% of the population in Eagle). In all, 14% of the County’s population in 2013 was non-white, slightly lower than the 16.3% of Idahoans who identified as non-white. However, this was higher than in 2000, when just 4.5% of the population identified as being Hispanic or Latino.
- Basque Heritage:** Many of Ada County’s residents have Basque heritage, which plays an important role in the culture of Ada County, especially in Boise. Elements of Basque culture can be found throughout the County, especially in the “Basque Block” in Boise. Annual festivals, such as Jaialdi in Boise, celebrate the Basque heritage of some of the County’s residents.

POPULATION OF ADA COUNTY BY AGE, 2000 AND 2013



Source: US Census Bureau

AGE

Median Age

- **Ada County vs. State:** The median age of residents in Ada County in 2013 was 35.4 years old, slightly older than the state-wide median age of 34.9. The median age in 2013 is also older than in 2000, when it was 32.8 years.

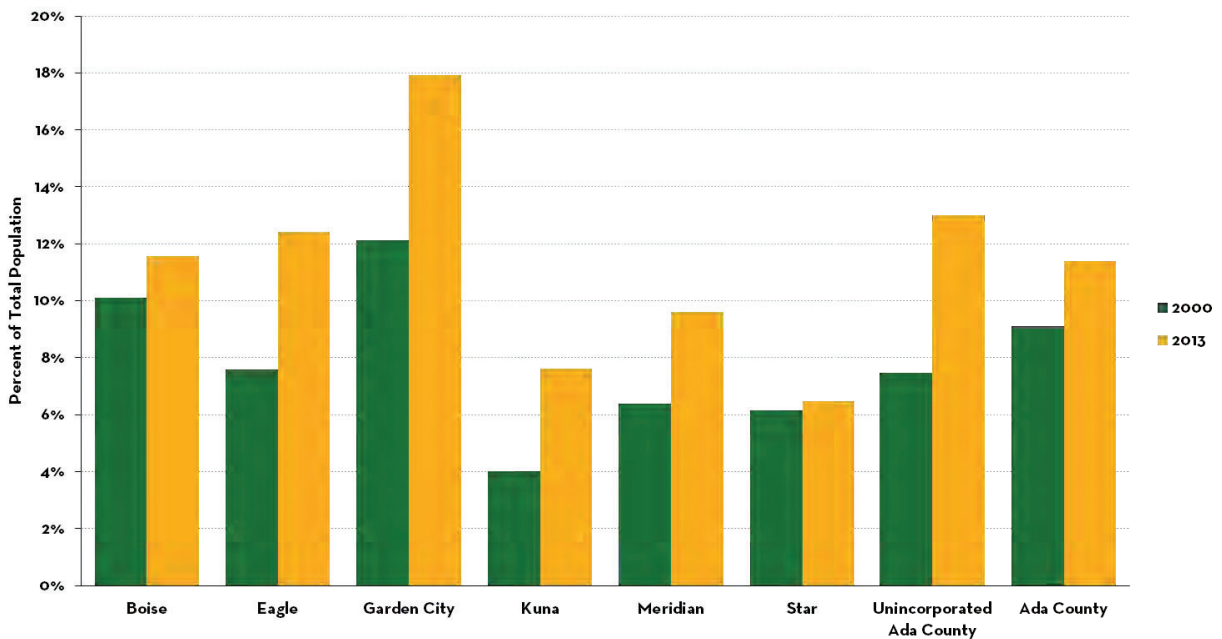
Distribution

- **Largest Age Cohorts in 2013:** Residents between the ages of 25 and 34 made up the largest age cohort in Ada County in 2013, accounting for 14.7% of the total population. The next largest cohorts were 35- to 44-year olds and 45- to 54-year olds. Together, these three cohorts accounted for 42.3% of the County’s population.
- **Largest Age Cohorts 2000:** In 2000, these same three age cohorts were also the largest in the County, and accounted for a greater proportion of the population (at 46.2%) than in 2013.
- **Millennial Population:** Millennials, or residents between the ages of 20 and 34, accounted for 21% of Ada County’s total population in 2013. The largest population of millennials in Ada County lived in Boise during 2013, accounting for almost a quarter (24%) of the

City’s total population. Kuna’s percentage of millennials as a share of its total population, at 28%, was the highest among all jurisdictions in Ada County in 2013.

- **Millennial Population Decrease:** In all jurisdictions except for unincorporated Ada County, millennials decreased as a percentage of the population between 2000 and 2013. However, all jurisdictions except for Garden City saw increases in their total number of millennials. The number of millennials in Ada County grew at an average annual rate of 1.8% between 2000 and 2013, slower than the annual growth rate of 2.4% for County as a whole.

**RETIREMENT-AGE POPULATION IN ADA COUNTY
(AGE 65+)**



Source: US Census Bureau

- **Retirement-Age Population:** In 2013, adults of retirement age (those over the age of 65), accounted for 11.4% of Ada County’s total population. Garden City had the highest proportion of retirement-age residents in 2013, with 18% of its total population, while Star (at 6%) had the lowest.
- **Percentage Increase:** While the population of Ada County increased at an average annual rate of 2.4% between 2000 and 2013, the population of adults over 65 increased by 4.6% over the same period. In all jurisdictions, this cohort made up a larger percentage of the total population in 2013 than it did in 2000.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Increased Demand for Services:** The population of Ada County is expected to grow by approximately 270,000 people by 2040, which will place increased demands on the infrastructure, resources, and services of the County and its cities. Since everyone living in Ada County is a resident of the County, new growth will increase demand for County services and resources, whether it occurs in the unincorporated County or in one of the cities.
- **Location of Future Growth in Unincorporated Ada County:** Predicting future growth in unincorporated parts of Ada County is difficult, as much of the unincorporated County's population lives in an ACI. When these areas are annexed will largely determine whether the additional 70,000 people predicted to live in unincorporated Ada County in 2040 will remain in the unincorporated County or end up in one of the cities.
- **School-Age Residents:** While the County is aging overall, some areas are younger than others. The number of families with school-age children, and where they choose to live in the future, will have impacts on both the services and amenities (such as parks and recreational facilities) provided by the County and cities, as well as the school districts located within Ada County.
- **Attracting Millennials:** The decrease in younger residents (especially those between the ages of 20-34) may signal the need to focus attention on employment opportunities and amenities that appeal to younger age cohorts. This process could be an opportunity to start a dialogue with the cities about what community qualities are attractive to 20 to 34 year olds, and how to promote/support these. Convincing young people to stay in Ada County after graduation from one of the area's colleges and universities will be key in creating a skilled and educated workforce, especially as institutions like Boise State University increasingly attract out-of-state students.
- **Aging Population:** Ada County looks set to see a substantial increase in older adults over the next 20 to 30 years. As the population of the County ages, older residents will require additional services, housing, transportation, and amenities tailored to meet their unique needs.



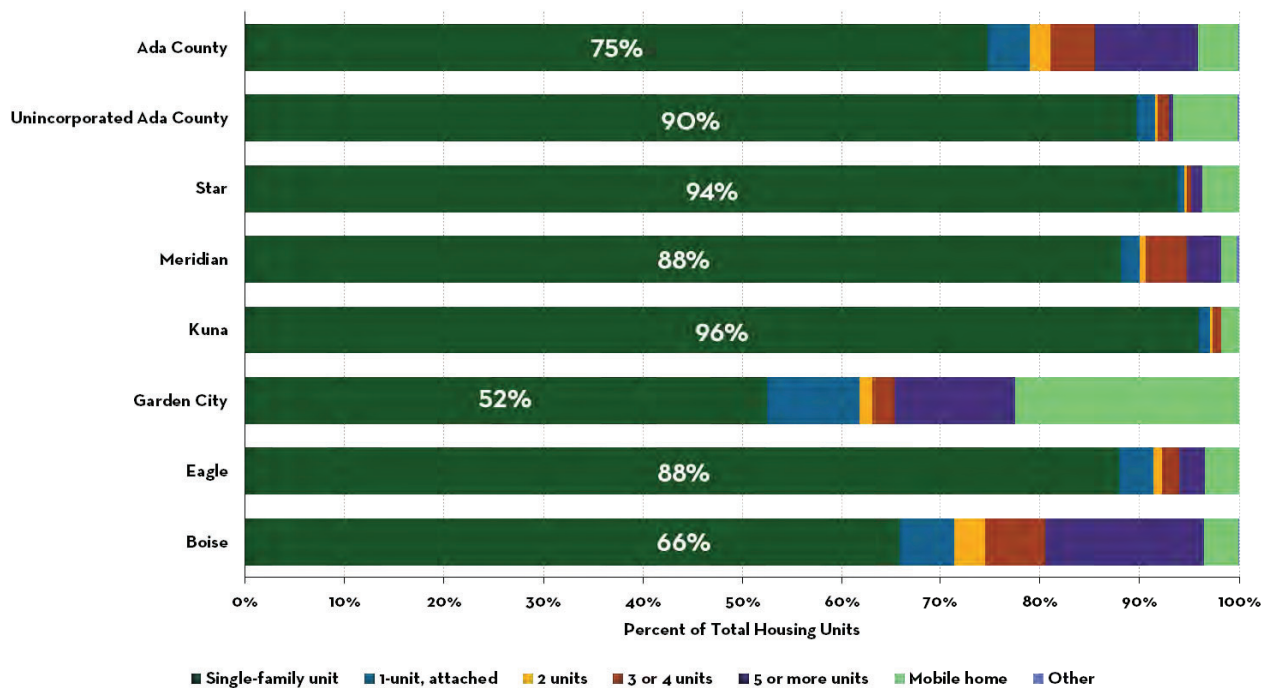
HOUSING

HOUSING

HOUSING UNITS

- **Total Units:** In all, there were 162,089 housing units in Ada County in 2013.
- **Increase:** Since 2000, the number of housing units has increased by 43,573 units, or at an average annual rate of 2.6%.
- **Housing Distribution:** The majority of housing units in Ada County were located in the City of Boise, which had 92,005 units (or 57% of the County’s total) in 2013. Meridian and unincorporated Ada County had the next largest number of housing units in 2013, accounting for 18% and 13% of the County’s total units, respectively.

HOUSING TYPES IN ADA COUNTY, 2013



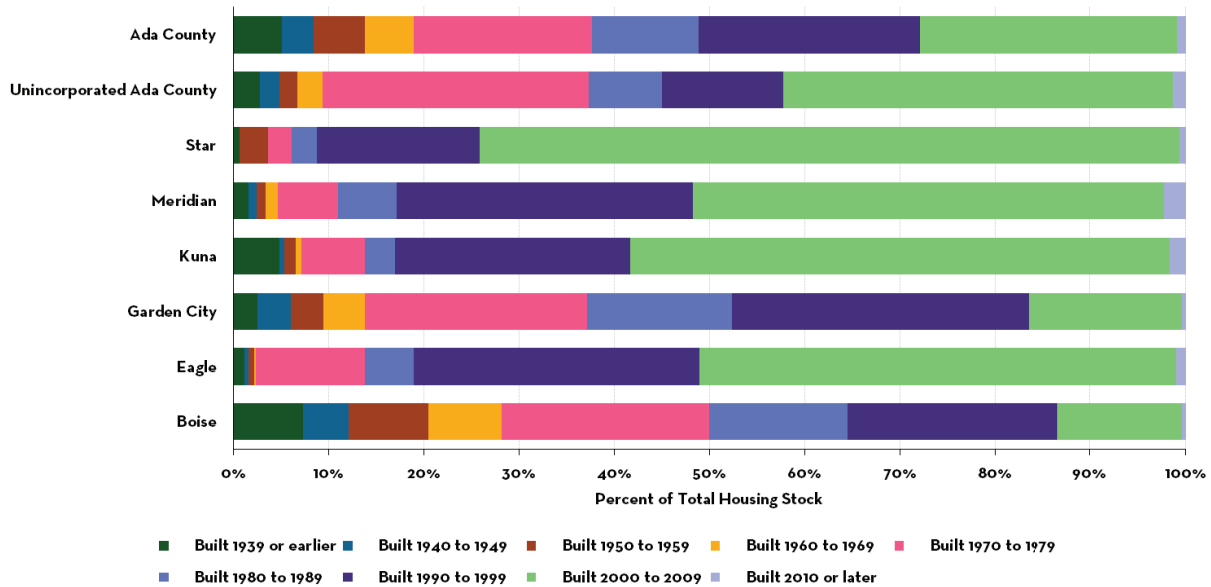
Source: US Census Bureau

Housing types

- **Single-Family:** 1-unit, detached or single-family homes were the most common housing type in Ada County, accounting for 75% of all units. Garden City and Boise had the lowest percentage of single-family homes, which made up 52% and 66% of their total housing units in 2013, respectively. The housing stock of Kuna, Star, and unincorporated Ada County had the highest percentage of single-family homes, with 96%, 94%, and 90%, respectively.

- Multi-Family:** According to building permit data collected by COMPASS, 2014 marked the first year where permits issued for multifamily units exceeded those for single-family homes (2,279 multifamily units versus 2,206 single-family units). Approximately 70% of these were issued for developments in Boise. However, multifamily units remain uncommon in Ada County, except for in Boise and Garden City.

AGE OF HOUSING IN ADA COUNTY, 2013



Housing Growth

- Past Housing Growth:** Around 64% of Boise’s housing stock was built prior to 1990, making it the oldest, on average, of any jurisdiction in the County. In Boise, the periods between 1970 and 1979 and 1990 and 1999 saw the most growth, with each period accounting for 22% (or 44% in total) of Boise’s current housing stock.
- New Trends in Housing Growth:** Meridian added more housing units to its total stock between 2000 to 2009 and 2010 to 2013 than did any other jurisdiction in Ada County. However, building permit data collected by COMPASS shows Boise issued more units in 2014 than Meridian.
- Distribution of New Homes:** Homes in Eagle, Kuna, Meridian, and Star are, on average, newer than elsewhere in the County. Over half of the homes built in each of these jurisdictions were built after 2000.

OCCUPANCY AND TENURE

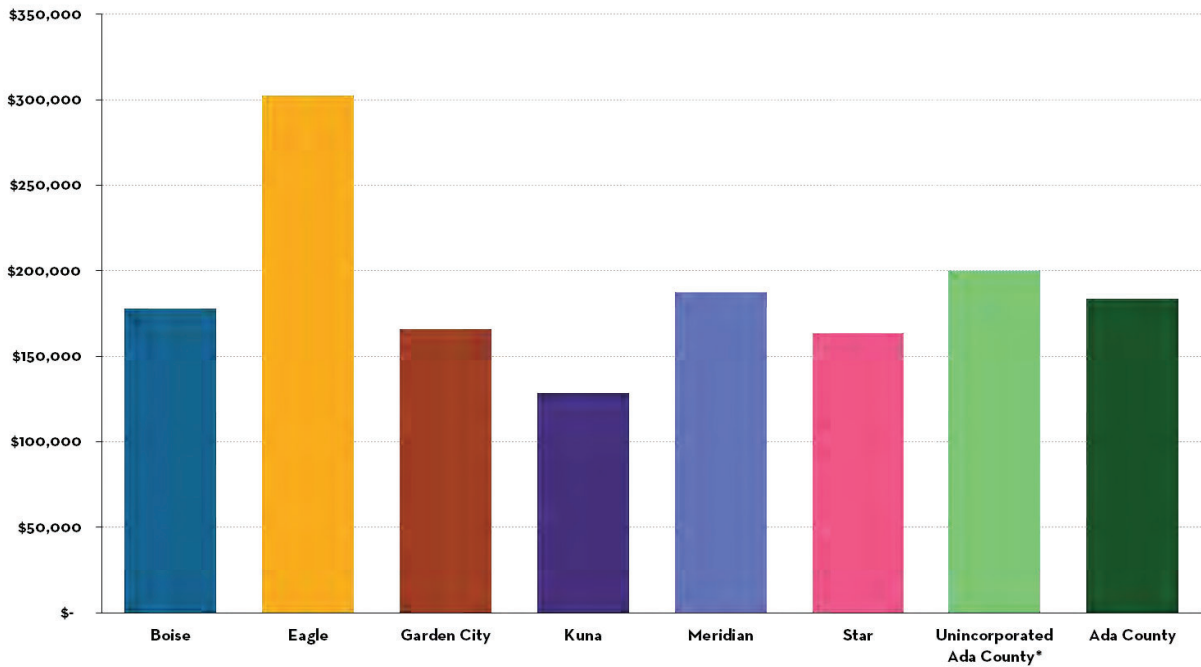
Vacant Housing

- **Ada County vs. State:** In all, just 6% of Ada County’s housing stock was vacant in 2013, much lower than the state-wide vacancy rate of 13.5%.
- **Vacancy Distribution:** In the unincorporated County, only 7% of homes were vacant, fewer than in Star, where 12% of homes were vacant. Kuna had the lowest vacancy rate in the County, at 2% in 2013.

Owners and Renters

- **Percentage of Owners vs. Renters:** 68% of occupied housing units in Ada County were owner-occupied in 2013, compared to 32% of units that were renter-occupied. This was almost exactly the same as in Idaho (70% owner-occupied and 30% renter-occupied) during the same year.
- **Highest Concentration of Rental Housing:** The majority (70%) of the County’s rental housing stock was located in Boise in 2013, although rental housing only accounted for 39% of that city’s total occupied housing units.
- **Distribution of Rental Housing:** With 39% of all occupied housing units renter-occupied, Garden City was the only other jurisdiction to have a higher percentage of renters than the County as a whole.
- **Owner-Occupied Housing:** Kuna had the highest rate of owner-occupied housing in the County, at 85% of all occupied units. Homeownership was next highest in unincorporated Ada County (82%), followed by Eagle (81%), Star (81%), and Meridian (75%).

MEDIAN HOME VALUES IN ADA COUNTY, 2013



*Median Home Values for Unincorporated Ada County are approximated based on the distribution of housing values in Ada County and its cities.

Source: US Census Bureau

VALUES AND COSTS

Home Values

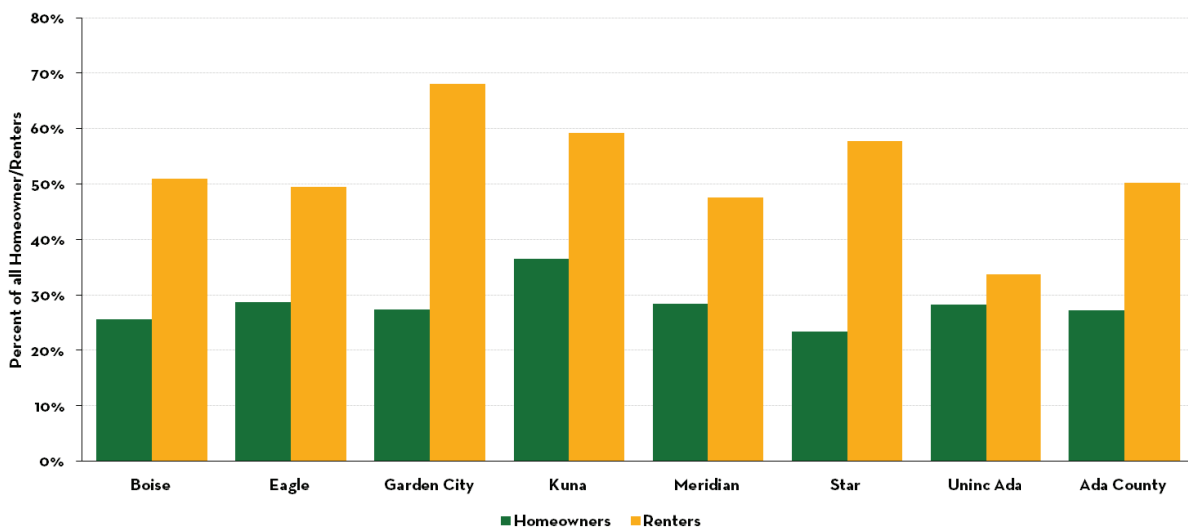
- **Median Value:** The median value of an owner-occupied home in Ada County in 2013 was \$183,600, over \$20,000 higher than the state median of \$162,100.
- **Change in the Median Value:** Median home values in the County increased since 2000, when they were \$124,700 (or approximately \$174,370 in 2013 dollars, adjusted for inflation). However, recent data from the American Community Survey indicate that the median home value in Ada County has been decreasing since 2006.
- **Highest Value:** In 2013, Eagle had the highest mean home value, at \$302,300, while Kuna had the lowest, at \$128,200.
- **Unincorporated Ada County Value:** While U.S. Census data is unavailable for housing units in unincorporated Ada County, the median owner-occupied home value in 2013 was likely close to \$200,000, higher than in the County as a whole and the second highest among the jurisdictions in the County.¹

¹ According to a breakdown of housing values in unincorporated Ada County derived from U.S. Census data, approximately 50% of housing had a value between \$0 and \$199,999 and 50% of housing had a value of \$200,000 or more.

Monthly Housing Costs

- Median Costs:** According to the U.S. Census, the median price paid by a homeowner for monthly costs (including mortgage payments) was \$1,383 in 2013, slightly higher than the median monthly costs for homeowners in Idaho.
- Median Rent:** The median gross monthly rent paid by renter households in Ada County was \$833 in 2013, slightly over \$100 more than the median gross monthly rent paid by renters in Idaho during the same year.
- Rent Variation:** Both Garden City and Boise, with median gross monthly rents of \$745 and \$784, respectively, had lower rents than the County as a whole. The other cities in Ada County all had higher median gross monthly rents than the county-wide median. Star had the highest median gross monthly rent in 2013, at \$1,184, followed by Eagle (\$1,102), Meridian (\$1,039), and Kuna (\$959).
- Unincorporated Ada County Rent:** Median rent figures are not available for unincorporated Ada County, but given that 52% of renter households paid over \$1,000 per month, it is likely that the median is somewhere between \$1,000 and \$1,499.

HOUSEHOLDS PAYING MORE THAN 30% OF INCOME ON HOUSING, 2013



Source: US Census Bureau

Affordability

- Overview:** In 2013, approximately one-third (34%) of Ada County’s households spent more than 30% of their incomes on housing, slightly higher than the 33% of households across the

State of Idaho who spent more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs.

- **Owner vs. Renter Affordability:** 27% of households in Ada County who owned their home spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs in 2013, compared to 50% of renter households.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

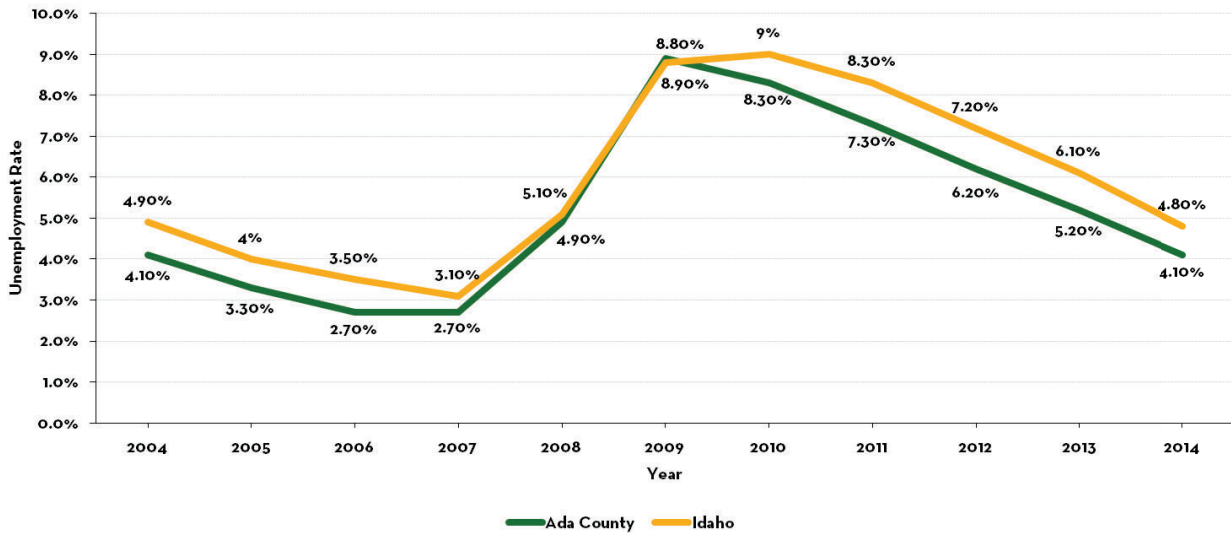
- **Single-Family Homes:** Most homes in Ada County were single-family homes in 2013. While there was some variation in the amount of single-family homes as a percentage of total units among the various jurisdictions in the County, the large supply of a single housing type limits the choices available to residents. While this is not an issue for those who prefer single-family homes, some County residents may be looking to live in alternative forms of housing, such as apartments or townhomes (by preference or by necessity).
- **Shift in Housing Growth:** Increasingly, growth in Ada County is occurring outside of Boise. This raises questions about how much of the County's current services and infrastructure are focused to serve Boise and its residents, and how much the current approach to service provision will need to change in the future as more people and homes are added elsewhere in the County.
- **Rental Housing:** Over two-thirds of Ada County's rental housing stock is located in Boise. Residents looking to rent a home will have a hard time finding housing elsewhere in the County. While not always true, single-family homes are not common as rental housing, as they tend to be larger than what typical renter households need, or require too much maintenance. Increasing the diversity of housing types found in Ada County's other cities could help expand housing options everywhere in the County.
- **Housing Affordability:** As growth continues in Ada County, housing affordability is likely to become more of a concern for residents, especially those who rent their homes. Already 1/3 of County residents spend more money on housing than is generally considered to be affordable. Supporting the construction of additional affordable housing across the County (especially for renters, since affordability is already an issue for 50% of renter-households), is just one solution that could help to free up more money for households to spend on other goods and services in the local economy.
- **Increasing Housing Options:** As Ada County's population ages, an increasing share of residents may seek to downsize from their current single-family home to apartments, condos, patio homes or other housing types with less maintenance and more accessible features. The County should consider whether or not there is a need for senior-friendly housing now and in the near future. Additionally, a mix of housing units should exist throughout the County for millennials and older adults.



ECONOMY

ECONOMY

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN ADA COUNTY AND IDAHO, 2004-2014



Source: State of Idaho Department of Labor

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment

- Unemployment:** Between 2004 and 2014, Ada County had lower rates of unemployment than the average for the State of Idaho, except during 2009. While unemployment has still not dropped to its pre-recession levels, 4.1% of Ada County's workforce was unemployed in 2014, slightly lower than the statewide unemployment rate of 4.8%.
- Great Recession:** Like most places across the United States, Ada County saw a significant increase in unemployment following the Great Recession in 2008. Unemployment rose from a low of 2.7% in 2007 to a peak of 8.9% in 2009. Since then, Ada County has seen a net increase of 22,320 jobs between 2004 and 2014, recovering more than the amount lost during the recession.

Employment by Industry

- Top Industry:** The largest industry by employment in Ada County during 2014 was the trade, utilities, and transportation sector, in which 41,244 people (or 20% of all workers) were employed.
- Other Top Industries:** The next largest industries in the County during 2014 were professional and business services (34,066); educational and health services (33,457); government (31,088); and leisure and hospitality (21,890). In all, these five industries accounted for 77% of all employment in Ada County in 2014.

TOP EMPLOYERS IN BOISE-NAMPA MSA, 2014		
BUSINESS	EMPLOYMENT RANGE	INDUSTRY
St. Luke’s Health System	8,400-8,499	Education and Health Services
Micron Technologies	5,700-5,799	Manufacturing
Boise State University	4,600-4,499	Education and Health Services
West Ada County School District	4,300-4,399	Education and Health Services
Boise School District	3,800-3,899	Education and Health Services
Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center	3,400-3,499	Education and Health Services
Wal-Mart	2,500-2,599	Trade, Utilities, Transportation
Hewlett-Packard	2,000-2,099	Manufacturing
JR Simplot	2,000-2,099	Manufacturing
Albertsons	2,000-2,099	Trade, Utilities, Transportation

Source: Boise Valley Economic Partnership

Top Employers

- Largest Employer:** According to the Boise Valley Economic Partnership (BVEP), the largest employer in the Boise-Nampa Metropolitan Statistical Area (which includes Ada, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Malheur (in Oregon), Owyhee, and Payette Counties) between July 2013 and June 2014 was St. Luke’s Health System, employing between 8,400 and 8,499 workers. Micron Technologies was the second largest employer, followed by Boise State University, the Meridian School District, and the Boise School District.²
- Private Sector:** Excluding public sector employers, St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Wal-Mart, and Hewlett-Packard round out the top five largest employers in the Boise-Nampa MSA.

² Note: the list of largest employers compiled by BVEP divides state and federal employees into their respective departments or agencies.

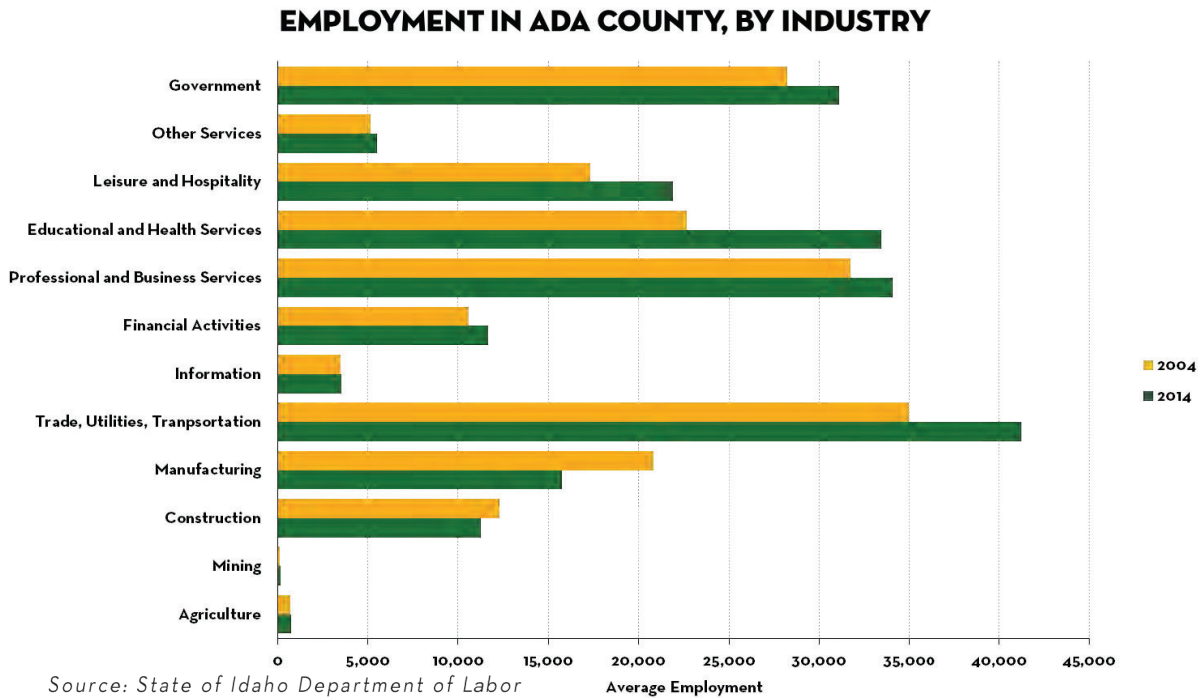
Military Installations

- **Gowen Field:** Gowen Field is the only Joint Military installation in Idaho. Located near the Boise International Airport, Gowen Field provides training opportunities for a variety of U.S. military forces, including the U.S. Army Reserves, the Air National Guard, the Army National Guard. While its primary role is as a training site for the armed forces, it also serves as a mobilization site, equipping and preparing units for deployments.
- **Orchard Combat Training Center:** An additional military installation located in Ada County is the Orchard Combat Training Center (OCTC). Located primarily on BLM land in southern Ada County, the OCTC includes both gunnery and firing ranges as well as maneuver areas.
- **Economic Impacts:** The presence of these military installations in Ada County provides a number of direct and indirect economic benefits. The Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc. estimates the Gowen Field alone provides around 2,818 jobs in the Treasure Valley, and has a total economic impact of \$210 million. Recently, there have been discussion within the U.S. Air Force for retiring the Gowen’s A-10 fighter jets, a decision that could have a large impact on Gowen Field, and its economic benefits to the County. A final decision by the Air Force has yet to be made.

Agriculture and Food Processing

- **Farms:** According to the USDA and the Idaho Department of Agriculture, there were 1,233 farms operating in Ada County in 2012, the fourth highest in the state. However, farms in Ada County are, on average, smaller than elsewhere in the state.
- **Agricultural Production:** In 2012, approximately \$221 million of agricultural products were sold in Ada County, the majority of which came from sales of livestock, poultry and their products (such as milk or eggs). This equates to an average production of \$179,229 per farm in the County.
- **Agriculture and Food Processing:** In addition to farming, food processing, production and manufacturing are an additional component to the agricultural economy in Ada County. J.R Simplot, Meadow Gold Dairy, PowerBar, and Bigelow Tea Company are all companies with agriculture or food processing facilities in Ada County.
- **Economic Impacts:** Jobs in agriculture and food processing can be found across a number of industries, such as manufacturing and transportation. In all, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there were approximately 15,430 food processing-related jobs in the Boise-Nampa MSA

in 2013, 5% of the metropolitan area’s total employment that year.



Employment Growth

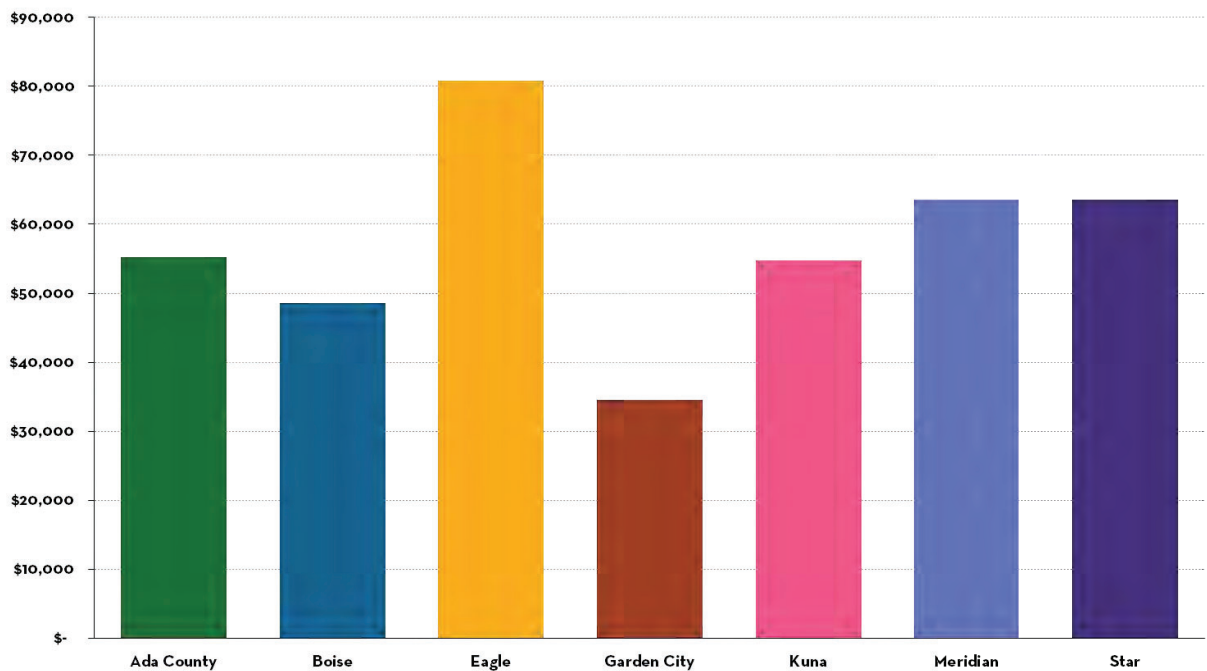
- Overall Growth:** The average number of people employed in Ada County increased by 22,320 workers since 2004. However, not all industries experienced growth during this period.
- Growing Industries:** The educational and health services industry grew the most between 2004 and 2014, adding over 10,800 jobs. The trade, utilities, and transportation and leisure and hospitality sectors saw the next largest amount of job growth, adding 6,296 and 4,550 jobs, respectively.
- Declining Industries:** The manufacturing and construction sectors both saw decreases in employment, losing 5,063 and 1,056 jobs, respectively.
- 10 “Hot Jobs”:** Looking to the future, the State of Idaho predicts that top 10 “hot jobs” (or those that on average rank high in terms of the abundance of jobs in the economy, jobs that are growing the fastest and jobs with the highest pay) in Southwestern Idaho (which includes Ada County, Adams County, Boise County, Canyon County, Elmore County, Gem County, Owyhee County, Payette County, Valley County, and Washington County) over the next 10 years will be jobs for registered nurses, electricians, carpenters, dental hygienists, physical therapists, construction

laborers, practical and vocational nurses, operating engineers and other construction equipment operators, and social and human services assistants.

Commuting

- **Residents Employed in Ada County:** Nearly 85% of all employed Ada County residents lived and worked somewhere in the County in 2013. 61% of residents worked in Boise, followed by 13% in Meridian, and 3% in Garden City.
- **Residents Employed Outside of Ada County:** Around 15% of County residents worked outside of Ada County. 7.6% worked in Canyon County, while the remaining 7.8% worked elsewhere.
- **Non-Residents Employed in Ada County:** 71% of people who worked in Ada County in 2013 also lived somewhere in Ada County. 40% of Ada County’s workers lived in Boise, 13% in Meridian, and 3% in Eagle.
- **Non-Resident Employee Distribution:** Because Ada County had more jobs in 2014 than working age population, a percentage of jobs were filled by workers who did not live in Ada County. In 2013, 15.6% of workers commuted to Ada County from Canyon County, 1.2% commuted from Gem County, 1.2% commuted from Elmore County, and 1% commuted from Twin Falls County. The remaining 10.1% of workers commuted to Ada County from some other county in Idaho.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES IN ADA COUNTY, 2013



Source: US Census Bureau

INCOME AND WAGES

Income

- **Median Income:** In 2013, the median household income for Ada County was \$55,210, higher than the median income of \$46,767 for the State of Idaho and higher than the national median income of \$53,046.
- **Median Income over Time:** The County's median household income in 2013 was approximately \$10,000 higher than the \$46,140 it was in 2000. However, adjusting for inflation, the median household income in 2000 was approximately \$64,500 in 2013 dollars, meaning the real median household income of the County has declined by more than \$9,000 in real terms.
- **Median Income Distribution:** Garden City had a median household income of \$34,571, the lowest of any municipality in the County. On the other hand, Eagle, at \$80,788, had the highest median household income in 2013.

Wages

- **Overall Wages:** The annual average wage paid to all workers employed in Ada County was \$43,028 in 2013.
- **Wage Distribution:** Broken down by industries, wages in Ada County ranged from \$15,128 in the leisure and hospitality industry to \$83,233 in the manufacturing industry.
- **Wages in Growing Industries:** Of the three fastest growing industries in Ada County between 2004 and 2014 (see "Employment Growth" above), the educational and health services industry had the highest average annual wage in 2013, at \$43,593. The trade, utilities, and transportation industry had an average wage of \$38,795, and the leisure and hospitality industry had an average annual wage of \$15,128, the lowest of any industry.
- **Wages over Time:** Wages have increased in nominal terms in Ada County since 2004, from \$35,729 to \$43,028. However, as with household median incomes, real wages actually decreased between 2004 and 2014 adjusting for inflation (the annual average wage in 2004 was approximately \$44,062 in 2014 dollars).

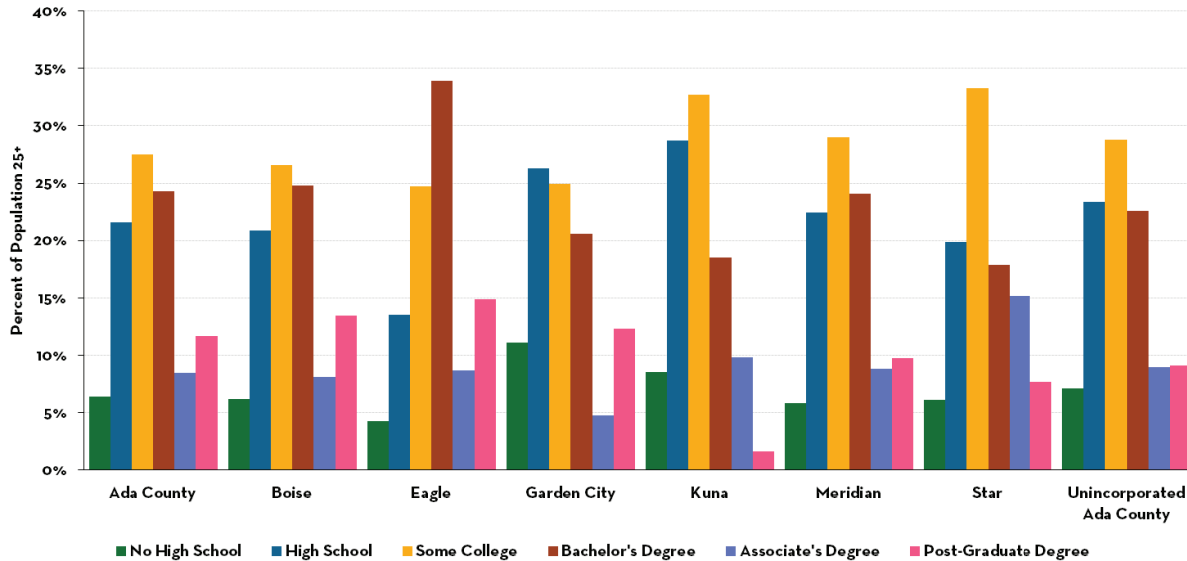
Poverty

- **Poverty over Time:** In Ada County, 13.1% of all residents had incomes lower than the poverty level in 2013, a higher percentage than in 2000 when 7.7% of all residents had incomes lower than

the poverty level. However, the County had a lower poverty rate in 2013 than the State of Idaho (15.5%) that same year.

- Poverty Rates by Group:** The poverty rate in Ada County varied among different groups. Among children under the age of 18 the rate was 15.4%, 8.4 points higher than in 2000. On average, minority groups had a poverty rate of 22% in 2013, higher than the 12.2% rate for Whites. Poverty rates were also higher for those with a lower educational attainment and among households headed by single mothers.
- Poverty by Municipality:** 21.1% of individuals in Garden City lived below the poverty line in 2013, the highest among all of Ada County’s cities. Eagle, at 5.9% had the lowest poverty rate. Boise, with a poverty rate of 15.6%, had the largest total number of individuals living below the poverty line in 2013.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN ADA COUNTY, 2013



Source: US Census Bureau

EDUCATION

Educational Attainment

- Ada County vs. State of Idaho:** Overall, the workforce in Ada County is more educated than the workforce in Idaho as a whole. In 2013, over one-third (36%) of residents of Ada County over the age of 25 had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to one-quarter (25%) of Idahoans.
- High School or Equivalent:** In 2013, just 6% of the population over 25 years of age in Ada County had no high school diploma or equivalent, much lower than the statewide rate of 11.2%.

- **Low Educational Attainment:** At 11%, Garden City had the highest rate of residents over 25 without a high school diploma or equivalent in 2013, although Boise had the largest number of residents without a high school diploma.
- **Education Distribution:** Residents of Eagle had the highest rates of educational attainment in the County, with just under half (49%) of its residents over 25 having a bachelor’s degree or higher. Even though Garden City had the highest percentage of residents over 25 without a high school diploma, it had a higher percentage of residents over the age of 25 with bachelor’s degrees (33%) than Kuna (20%) or Star (26%).

Schools Districts

- **School Districts by Size:** Ada County is home to four different school districts. The largest district as of the 2014-2015 school year was the West Ada School District, with a total enrollment of 36,859 students. The Boise School District was the next largest by enrollment, with 26,275 students, followed by the Kuna School District, with an enrollment of 5,220 students.
- **Enrollment over Time:** Overall, enrollment in schools in the Boise, West Ada, and Kuna school districts has increased by 20,536 students since the 1995-1996 school year, an increase of approximately 43% over the past 20 years or around 1.9% each year.
- **Boise School District Enrollment:** Boise School District has seen its enrollment both increase and decrease year to year, and actually had around 400 fewer students enrolled in its schools during the 2014/2015 school year than it did during the 1995/1996 school year. The average annual growth rate in enrollment between these years was -0.1%.
- **Enrollment Growth:** Kuna and West Ada, on the other hand, have seen large amounts of growth in their districts. The West Ada School District has grown at an average annual rate of 3.7%, while the Kuna School District has grown at an average annual rate of 4.1%.

Colleges and Universities

- **Top College by Enrollment:** The most prominent college or university in Ada County is Boise State University (BSU), a public university located in Boise. In the fall of 2014, 22,259 undergraduate and graduate students were enrolled at the university, an increase of 29% since 2004, when enrollment was 17,254 students.
- **BSU Instate vs. Out-of-State Enrollment:** The student body of BSU has also changed over the past decade. Whereas in 2004,

91% of students were from Idaho, and 60% were from cities in Ada County, in 2014 only 78% of students were from Idaho, and 45% from cities in Ada County.

- **BSU Majors and Degrees:** BSU offers a range of majors and degrees at the undergraduate, graduate, doctorate, and associate level, a total of 196 different programs. According to the University, the largest undergraduate program was in Community and Environmental Health, followed by Nursing, Psychology, Management, and Marketing and Finance.
- **College of Western Idaho:** Another important public institution of higher education in Ada County is the College of Western Idaho (or CWI). While its main campus is located in Nampa, ID (in Canyon County), CWI also has a campus located in Boise; and approximately half of its 20,700 enrolled students live in Ada County. CWI offers associates degrees, technical certificates, and other certificates in a variety of areas.
- **Private and For-Profit Colleges:** There are a number of private and for-profit colleges and universities located in Ada County, including: Boise Bible College, Brown Mackie College, Broadview University, Carrington College, Concordia University School of Law, ITT Technical Institute, Lesley University, Stevens-Henager College, Treasure Valley Community College, and the University of Phoenix.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

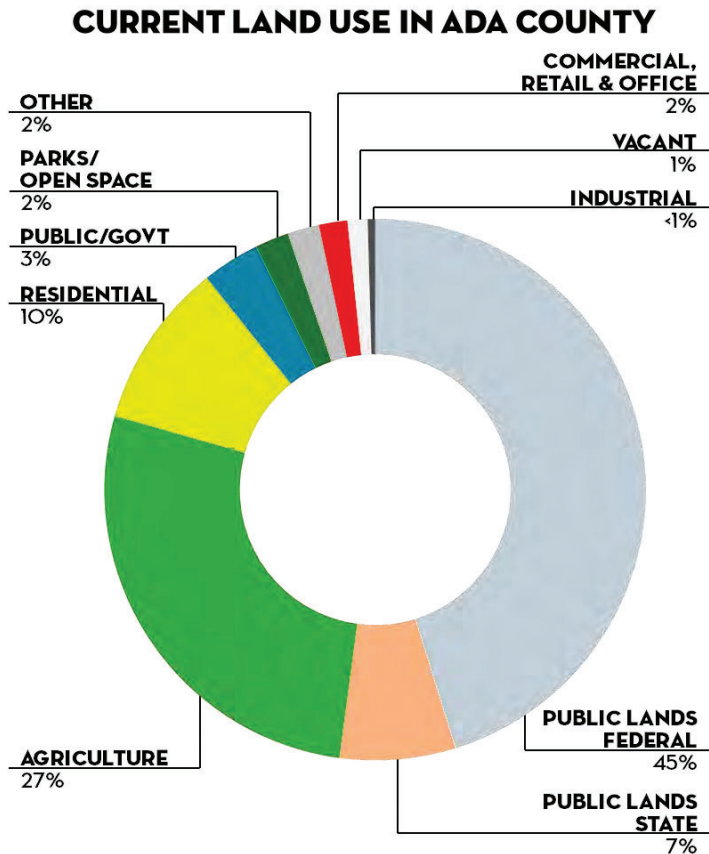
- **Economic Recovery:** Employment in Ada County has recovered from the losses experienced during the Great Recession. However, job recovery has not been equal across industry sectors. The construction and manufacturing industries both have fewer jobs today than in 2004, however, the State's "hot jobs" list seems to indicate that the construction industry will make a resurgence in the coming years.
- **Job Growth:** Among the different industries in the County, the educational and health services sector grew the most between 2004 and 2014. This industry should continue to grow, as four of the top 10 "hot jobs" identified by the State for Southwestern Idaho fall into this industry.
- **Agriculture and Food Processing:** Increasingly, food producers are looking to locate near where the agricultural products they process on are grown. Companies such as J.R. Simplot and PowerBar have facilities in Ada County, and more have facilities in nearby Canyon County. Moving forward, the Treasure Valley, and Ada County in particular, could become important centers of food production due to access to agricultural products as well as transportation networks, such as I-84, railroad lines, and an international airport.
- **Increased Commuting:** While most of Ada County's residents also work in Ada County, nearly 30% of workers commute from areas outside of the County. This number has increased from approximately 24% in 2003. As economic growth continues in Ada County, it is likely that more workers will commute to Ada County, especially from nearby Canyon County. More commuters from outside the County will have impacts on the transportation system, especially highways.
- **Income and Wage Stagnation:** Incomes and wages in Ada County have increased in nominal terms, but have actually decreased once adjusted for inflation. This means that the cost of living and prices paid by residents of Ada County for goods and services have increased faster relative to increases in wages and incomes. In general, residents of the County will feel poorer today than they did in 2000 or 2004.
- **Well-Educated Population:** Overall, the population of Ada County is more educated than the population of the state as a whole, making it an attractive place for businesses to locate. The proportion of college educated workers is likely to rise in the future, as many of the "hot jobs" identified by the state of Idaho require some level of tertiary education.
- **School District Enrollment:** If current trends continue, the Boise School District will see decreasing enrollment, while West Ada and Kuna school districts will see more students each year. Close coordination and cooperation among districts may be necessary to make the best use of existing facilities.
- **Boise State University:** BSU has grown to attract a much more diverse student body to the region, and currently offers a wide range of degree programs and majors. Such a large university helps to raise the average educational attainment of residents, helping to make the County an even more attractive location for businesses. Ensuring students educated in Ada County remain to work and live in Ada County following graduation should be a top priority for increasing the education and skills of the County's workforce.

ADA COUNTY CODE
ADA COUNTY IDAHO
VOLUME II

LAND USE



LAND USE

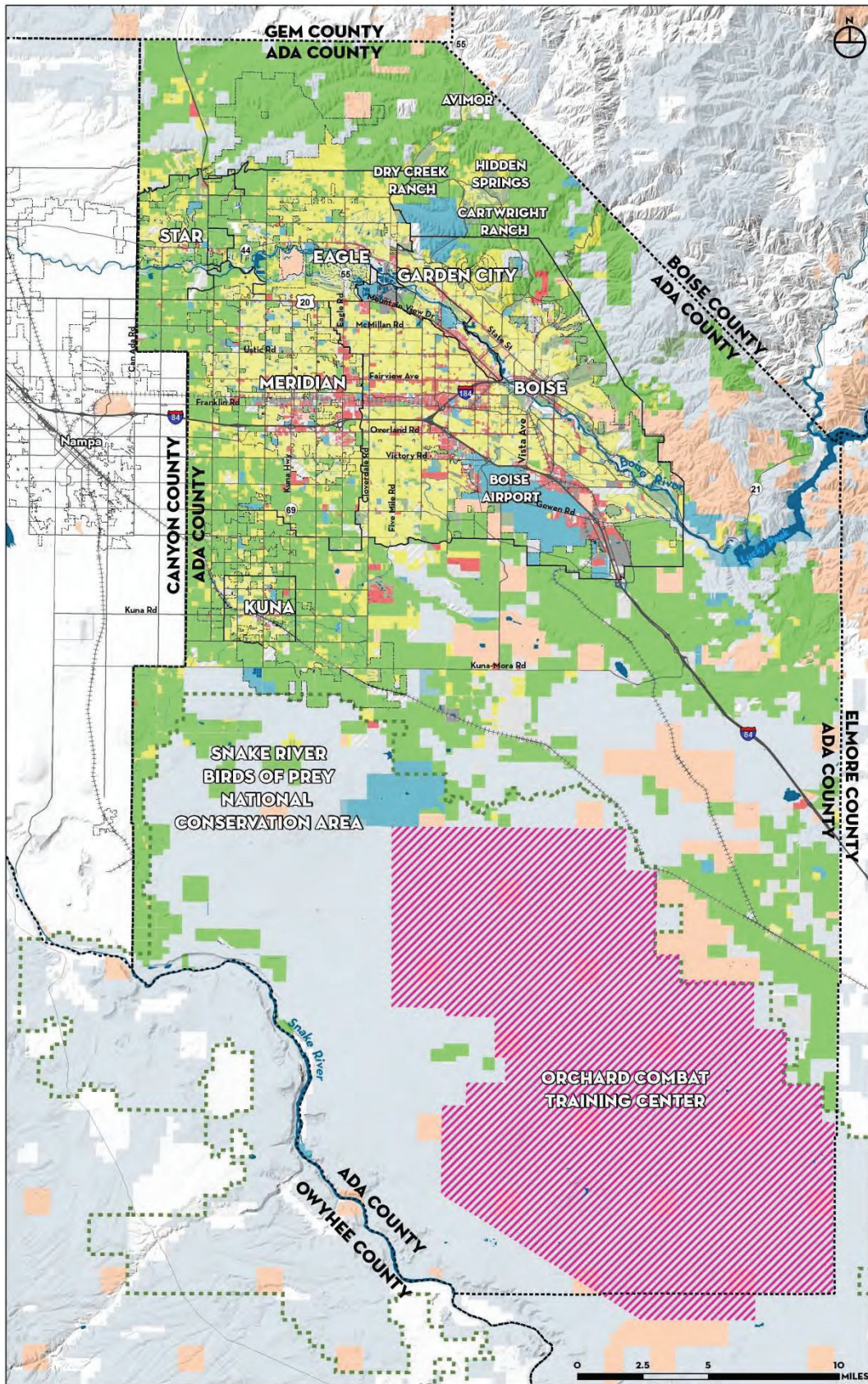


Source: COMPASS; Ada County Assessor

EXISTING LAND USE

Overall

- **Public Lands:** Public lands account for roughly 52% of the County's total area. Most public lands are found in the southern portion of Ada County, in the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, and in the foothills to the east of Boise.
- **Agricultural:** Agricultural lands (though not necessarily active) are the next most common land use in the County, accounting for 27% of the total area. Once a dominant use of the land in Ada County, agricultural lands have been gradually replaced with suburban and urban development.
- **Other Land Uses:** Residential land uses account for approximately 10% of land use in the County. Commercial, retail, and office uses and industrial uses account for a little less than 3% of all land uses in the County.



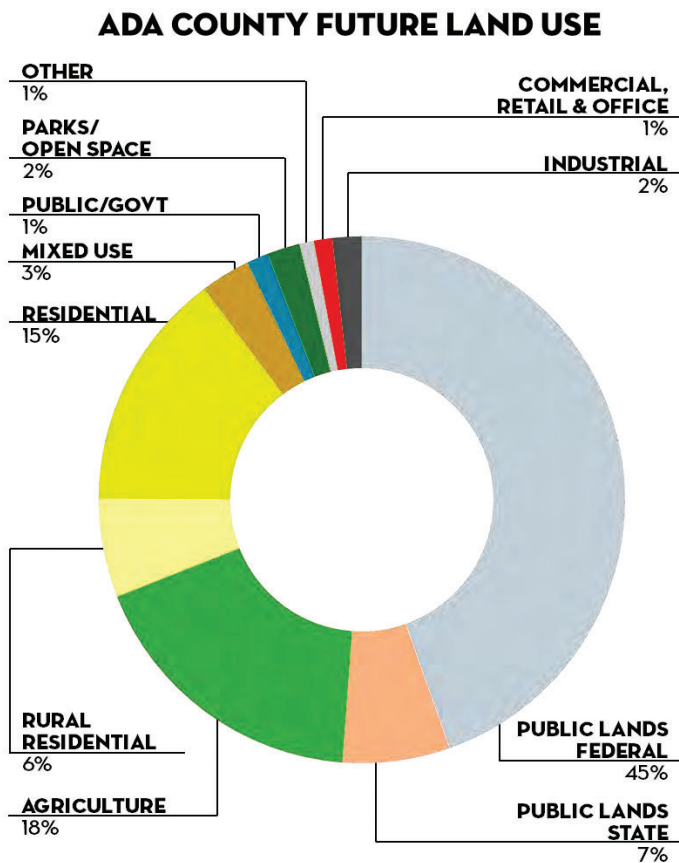
ADA COUNTY - CURRENT LAND USE

Source: COMPASS; Ada County Assessor

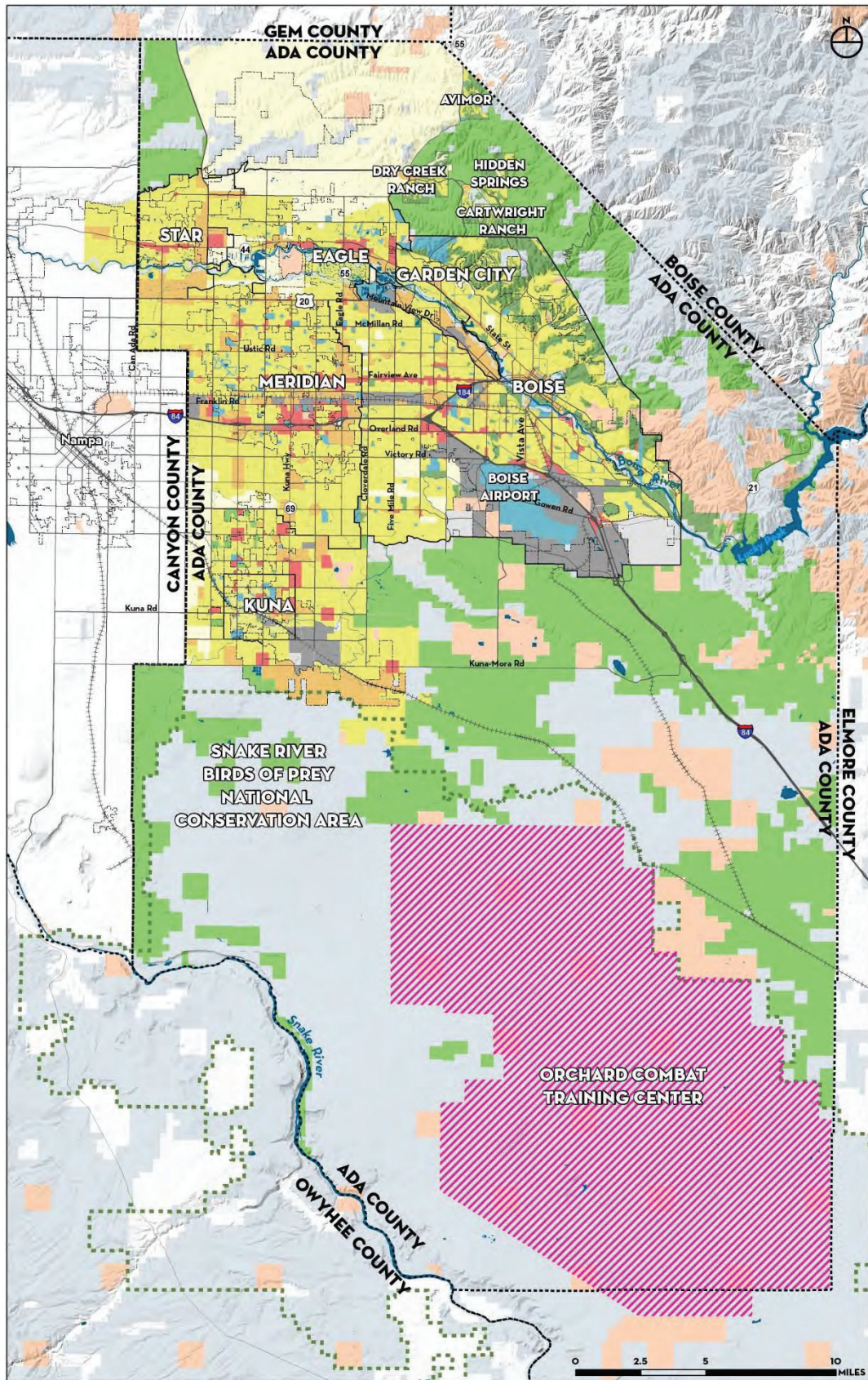
Outside ACIs

- **Undeveloped Land:** Unincorporated Ada County outside of Areas of City Impact is largely undeveloped. Approximately 66% of this land area is managed by federal and state agencies, and 26% is agricultural.
- **Residential Development:** There are a few small areas of residential development in the southern portion of the unincorporated County, but most development is concentrated in the four planned communities located in the northeast of Ada County. In all, residential land uses cover 3% of the unincorporated area outside of ACIs.
- **Commercial Development:** There is little commercial development, account for less than 1% of the unincorporated County.

FUTURE LAND USE



Source: COMPASS; Ada County Assessor



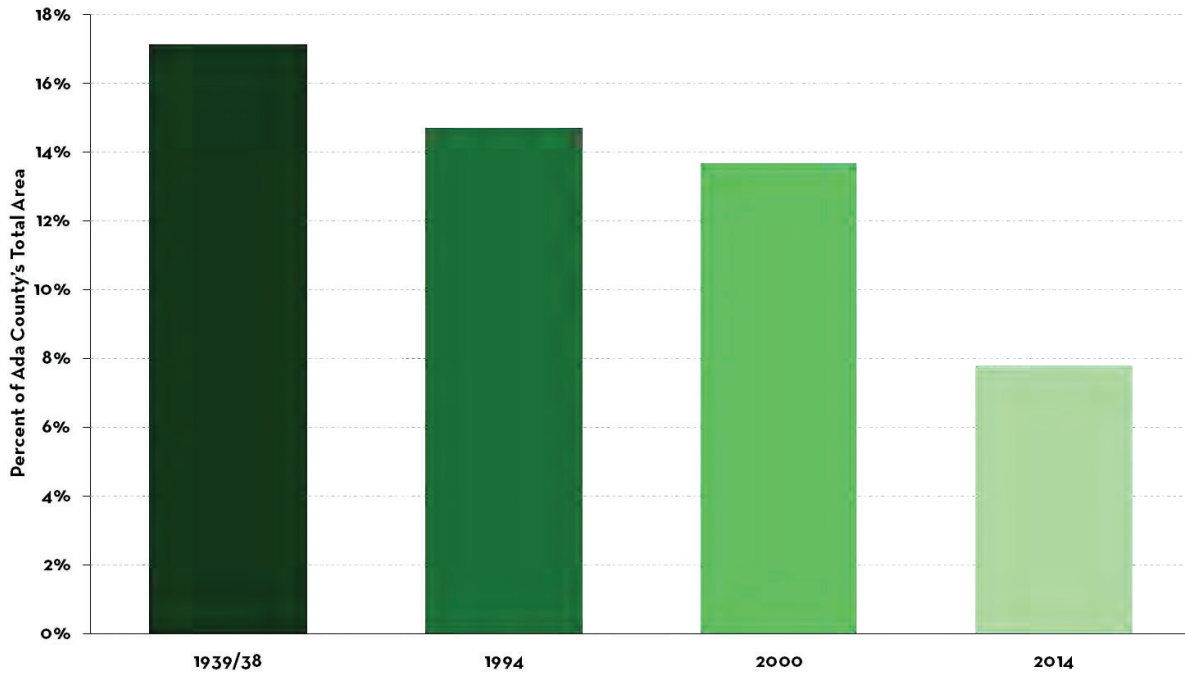
ADA COUNTY - FUTURE LAND USE

Source: COMPASS; Ada County Assessor

See “Ada County Future Land Use” chart on previous page for the map legend.

- **Agriculture:** Based on the comprehensive plans of the six cities in Ada County, agriculture should still be the largest land use in the County over the next 15 to 20 years. However, it will account for much less of the County's total land area than it does today. Agriculture is likely to decrease from 27% to around 18% of the land area in Ada County as the cities' land use plans are implemented over the next 10-20 years.
- **Rural Residential:** Many of the cities' comprehensive plans introduced a new agricultural/rural residential land use category, which would allow for residential development but at much lower densities and with the intent of preserving existing agricultural aspects and characteristics of the landscape. Such land uses will account for 6% of the County's total area.
- **Residential, Industrial, and Commercial:** Residential land uses will increase by 5 points, from 10% today to 15% in the future. Industrial land uses will also increase, while commercial, office, and retail uses will remain similar to today.
- **Mixed-Use:** Multiple cities' comprehensive plans included a new land use category for mixed-use development. Mixed-use should account for 3% of the County's land use in the future.

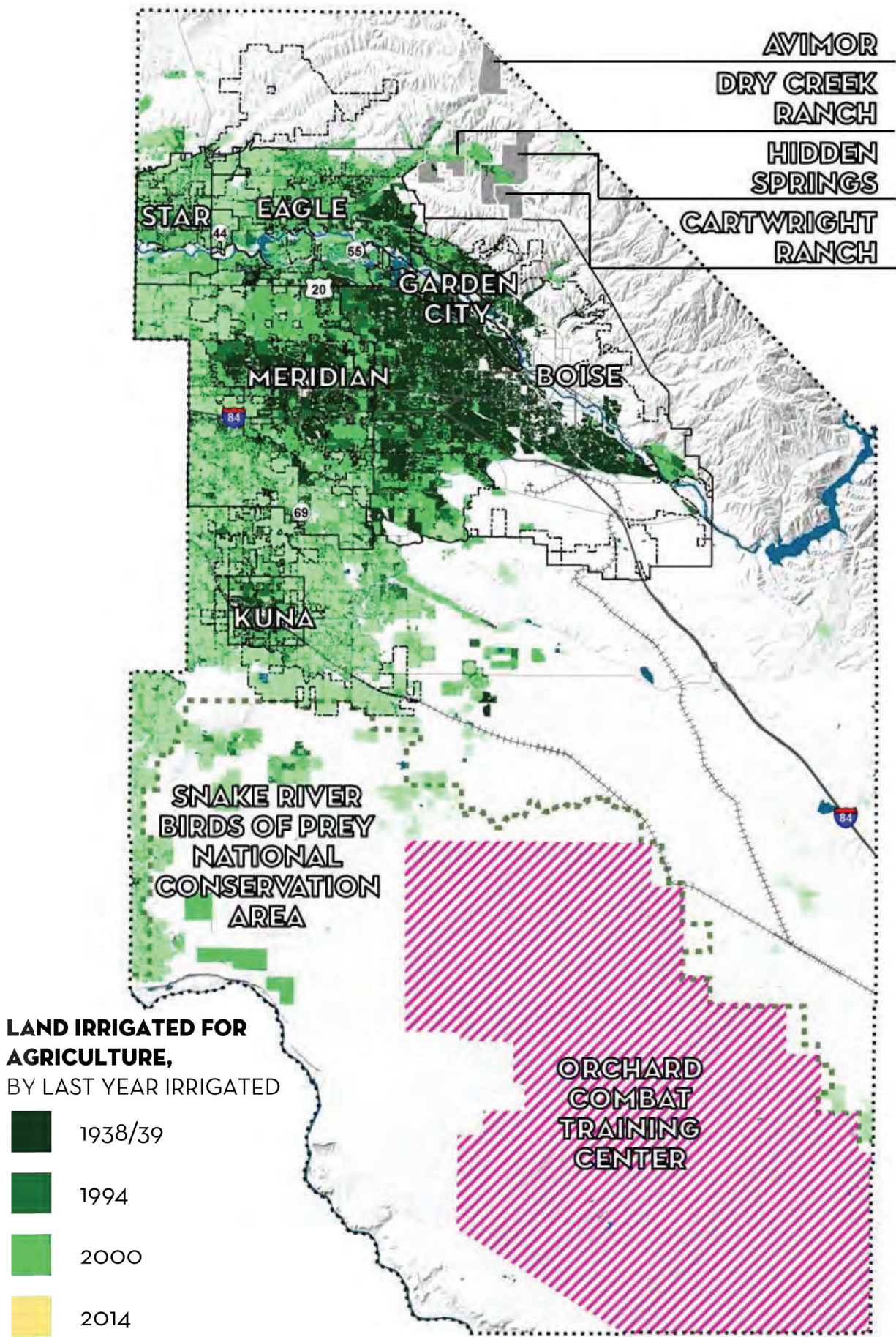
AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN ADA COUNTY 1939-2014



Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service; State of Idaho Dept. of Water Resources

AGRICULTURE

- Prime Farmland:** A large portion of the County contains soils considered to be prime farmland (if irrigated) by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In all, 135,034 acres are considered prime farmland, or 20% of Ada County’s land area.
- Farming Obstacles:** One of the largest barriers to agriculture in Ada County is water, as almost all types of farming requires irrigation. Another obstacle is the limits on agriculture in protected areas. For example, just 22% (or 29,618) of the acres identified as prime farmland are used for farming. 76,467 acres (or 57%) of prime farmland are not used for agriculture, but have not been developed as much of this land is located within the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, and therefore cannot be farmed.
- Crop Cultivation:** While the existing land use breakdown indicates that roughly 27% of Ada County is agricultural lands, data from the USDA and the Idaho Department of Water Resources that even less is used for cultivation of crops. According to the USDA, in 2014 only 8% of the County was used for the cultivation of crops, down from 14% in 2000.



LAND IRRIGATED FOR AGRICULTURE, BY LAST YEAR IRRIGATED

- 1938/39
- 1994
- 2000
- 2014

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service; State of Idaho Dept. of Water Resources

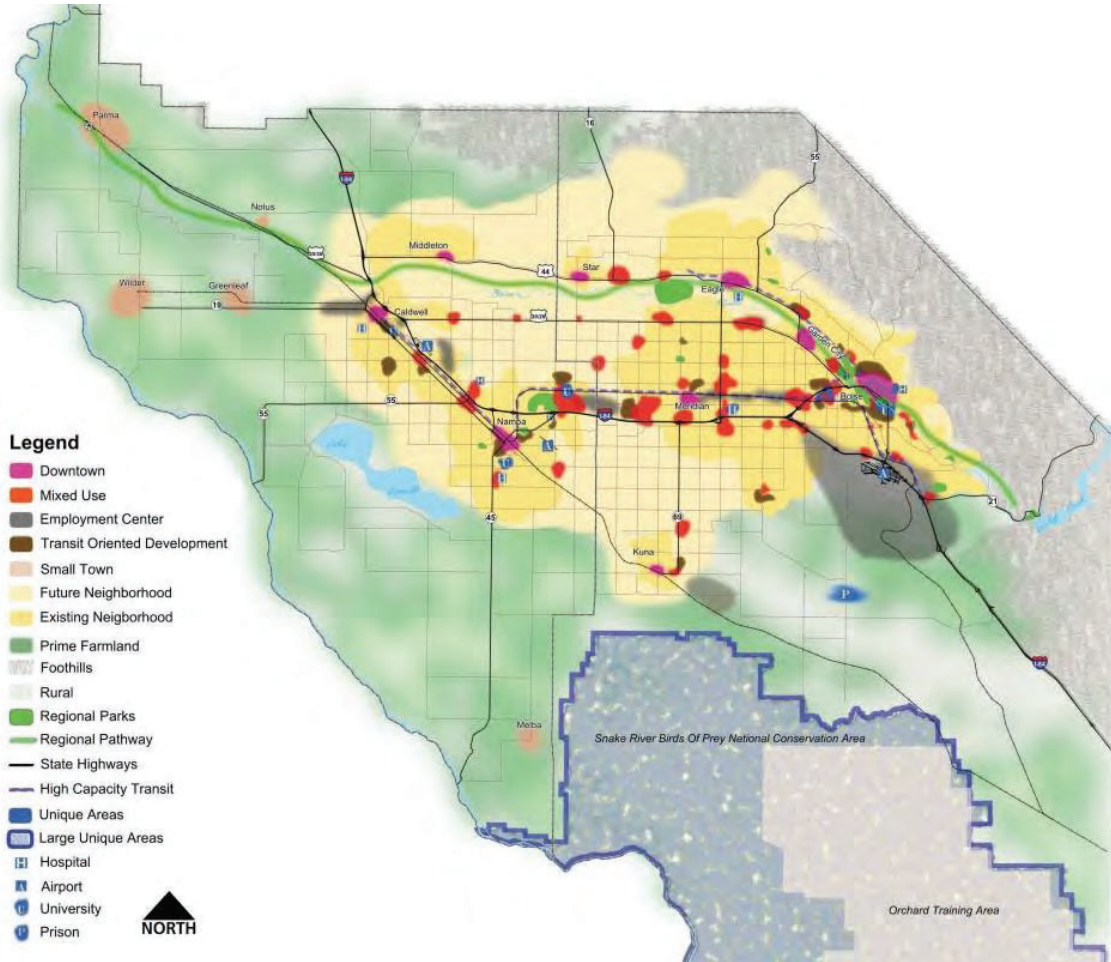
- **Agricultural Distribution:** Currently, most agricultural lands are located in the northwestern part of Ada County, around Star and Kuna. Agriculture was common in most of northern Ada County in the past, but development in Boise, Garden City, and Meridian has meant much of that land has been converted to other land uses, mostly residential.

PLANNED COMMUNITIES

- **Overview:** While much of unincorporated Ada County is rural, urban development is allowed for through approved “planned communities”. Planned communities are master planned developments that are required to include a compatible mix of land uses, adequate internal connectivity and connections to exiting transportation networks, and open space provision and habitat protection.
- **Public Services:** Since the County does not provide urban services (like water, sewer, power, etc.), developers of planned communities must make agreements with existing service districts, or construct the proper facilities themselves. In addition, they are required to either build school facilities or set aside land for the construction of schools in the future. Full details on what is required for new planned communities are detailed in the Ada County Land Use Code.
- **Existing Planned Communities:** Currently, there are 4 planned communities in Ada County: Avimor, Hidden Springs, Cartwright Ranch, and Dry Creek Ranch. All are located in the northern Ada County.

REGIONAL PLANNING

COMMUNITIES IN MOTION 2040 VISION



Source: COMPASS

Communities in Motion 2040

- Overview:** Communities in Motion 2040 is the current long-range transportation plan developed by COMPASS, the metropolitan planning organization (or MPO) for Ada County and Canyon County, and adopted in 2014. The plan includes goals related to land use, housing, infrastructure, health, economic development, open space, and farmland, in addition to transportation.
- CIM 2040 Vision:** Through extensive community outreach, COMPASS developed a preferred vision for growth in Ada and Canyon Counties which seeks to concentrate new development along transit corridors and in major activity centers in order to allow for the preservation of open space throughout both counties. Under this scenario, new growth would be comprised of a variety of housing types and densities.

- **Performance Measures:** Implementation of the plan is gauged through 56 performance measures to be tracked by COMPASS. COMPASS has also developed a development checklist to help local governments evaluate whether new developments help support the vision and guiding principles of *Communities in Motion 2040*.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- **Ada County Historic Preservation Council:** Established in 1988, the Ada County Historic Preservation Council is charged by the Board of County Commissioners with the preservation of Ada County’s heritage, particularly in rural Ada County. The Council consists of 10 volunteer members, and supported by staff from Ada County Development Services. In addition to its efforts to educate property owners and the public about the value of historic preservation, the Council also conducts surveys of properties that it considers to be eligible for listings on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Preservation Plan:** In addition, the Council released a plan in 2006 to assess the County’s historic preservation needs and establish a short-term strategic plan for addressing these needs.
- **Collaboration:** The Historic Preservation Council works with a variety of other historical societies and preservation advocates in Ada County. As its budget permits, the Council is a member of organizations such as the Idaho State Historical Society, the Dry Creek Historical Society, Meridian Historical Society, among others.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Public Lands:** Much of Ada County is managed by federal and state government agencies, which provides tremendous opportunities for outdoor recreation to County residents. Each agency has its own mission for land management, which needs to be considered by the County as it plans for its future.
- **Changing Role of Agriculture:** Over time, agricultural lands across Ada County have been converted to other uses, especially in cities like Boise and Meridian. While all agricultural lands in the County are not likely to disappear entirely over the next 10-20 years, the County and its residents will need to look at ways to preserve agricultural lands if they would like to maintain the agricultural character of the unincorporated County.
- **ACIs:** The influence of the Comprehensive Plan on land use in Ada County is limited by public lands and the expansion of the cities' ACIs. Since a city's comprehensive plan applies to its ACI in Ada County, the amount of land planned for under the County's Comprehensive Plan will continue to shrink in the future as more lands are added to cities' ACIs. Alternatives to this arrangement are possible under LLUPA, and could be explored further through the Ada County 2025 process.
- **Ada County Comprehensive Plan:** Much of the land use outside of the ACIs in Ada County is currently public lands or agricultural lands. Urban development is ongoing in the planned communities in the north of the County. While no additional planned communities are currently proposed in Ada County, more have been proposed in the past, especially in southern Ada County. The Comprehensive Plan Update process is an opportunity to re-examine the planned community process to ensure development occurs in rural Ada County in a way that is desirable and beneficial to the County and its residents.
- **Regional Planning:** Recent planning efforts, such as the *Communities in Motion 2040* plan, have set the stage for a regional vision for growth and development in Ada County. The policies, recommendations, and vision supported in such efforts should be incorporated into the updated Comprehensive Plan where they align with the vision of the County and its residents.



INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

SOLID WASTE AND LANDFILL

- **Service Provider:** Solid waste services are provided by Ada County through the Department of Solid Waste Management, although trash collection services are contracted through a private provider, Republic Services.
- **Ada County Landfill:** The majority of solid waste in Ada County is disposed of in the Ada County Landfill, located in the foothills north of Boise. The landfill consists of two “cells” the Hidden Hollow and North Ravine cells. Of the two, the Hidden Hollow cell is the oldest, and is reaching its designed-for capacity. Efforts are underway to cap the cell. The North Ravine cell was commissioned in 2004, and has enough capacity to accommodate solid waste generated in the County for the next 100 years.
- **Landfill Gases Converted to Energy:** The Department of Solid Waste Management collects the gases produced by the landfill and converts it into energy. According to the Department’s website, the gas produced annually is enough to power around 2,400 for one year, and generates revenues of \$272,000.

LAW ENFORCEMENT & PUBLIC SAFETY

- **Sheriff’s Office:** Police services are provided by a number of agencies in Ada County. The Ada County Sheriff’s Office is the largest local law enforcement agency in the State of Idaho, with 655 employees. As in most counties, the Sheriff of Ada County is an elected position, chosen by voters every 4 years.
- **Jurisdiction:** Sheriff’s deputies patrol areas in unincorporated Ada County, as well as in Eagle, Kuna, and Star, which contract with the County for law enforcement services. The Sheriff’s Office also operates the County jail and a crime lab.
- **Local Police Forces:** Boise, Garden City, and Meridian have their own local police forces.
- **Paramedics:** In 2013, Ada County and 6 other emergency medical services agencies entered into a Joint Powers Agreement, unifying the provision of EMS functions in the County under a single system. In all, the Ada County Paramedics operate 13 stations across the County.
- **Coroner:** The Ada County Coroner is another elected position within Ada County, chosen by voters every four years. The Coroner is responsible for determining the cause and manner of death for all deaths (including natural deaths, accidental deaths, homicides and suicides) that occur within the County. To this end,

the Coroner’s office employs a Forensic Team, an Anthropology Team, an Investigations Team, as well as administrators. The Coroner also operates a forensics facility.

- **Prosecutor:** The Ada County Prosecutor is an elected position within Ada County, chosen by voters every four years. The prosecutor is the chief lawyer for the County, representing the County, its offices, and its residents in the Fourth Judicial District Court. The Prosecutor’s office has two divisions, which handle both criminal and civil cases. The Prosecutor also provides legal advice and guidance to the Board of County Commissioners and other departments within Ada County, in addition to running special programs, such as the Domestic Violence Unit.

PARKS AND WATERWAYS

- **County Operated Parks:** In all, Ada County owns and operates approximately 900 acres of parks, mostly regional parks. These include Ladybird Park, Barber Park, and Seaman Gulch. In addition, the County runs 1 community park, Barclay Bay, located at Lucky Peak Reservoir. In addition to Barber Park, Ada County also owns and manages the Ada County Bike Park, which was acquired from the City of Eagle in 2014.
- **County Managed Trails:** Ada County also manages a variety of trail facilities throughout the County. These include segments of trail along the Boise River Greenbelt, as well as trails created through the Ridge to Rivers partnership (in coordination with the City of Boise, the BLM, and other state and federal agencies) and a portion of the historic Oregon Trail.
- **Ada County as Coordinator:** In one survey of attendees at a public meeting for the 2007 Ada County Parks and Open Space Master Plan, the top parks and open space priority was the need to create or preserve an interconnected trail system that accommodates multiple users, followed by creating financing mechanisms and/or placing a higher priority on funding for parks, open space, trails, and recreation. In another survey, the highest ranked “priority action” for the County with regards to parks and open space was to “Acquire land for open space” and to “Develop a regional trail system”.
- **Ada County as Provider:** In the same survey, no participants indicated that the County should “Provide recreation services”, while just 4 out of 92 voted that the County should “Develop existing parks” on sites currently undeveloped, and just 5 out of 92 voted that the County should “Acquire land for regional parks”.

OTHER SERVICES

- **Treasurer:** The Ada County Treasurer is an elected position within Ada County, chosen by voters every 4 years. The Treasurer

is responsible for collecting, safe keeping, accounting, depositing, and disbursing County funds. The collection of property taxes is one of the primary responsibilities of the Treasurer.

- **Assessor:** The Ada County Assessor is another elected position within Ada County, chosen by voters every 4 years. One of the major responsibilities of the Assessor is to determine a fair and equitable valuation of real and personal property in the County for taxation purposes. The Assessor also manages the County's land records, as well as motor vehicle licensing and titles (working with the Idaho Department of Transportation).
- **Clerk:** The Ada County Clerk is an elected position within Ada County, chosen by voters every 4 years. The Clerk runs the Office of the Clerk, Auditor, and Recorder, which encompasses a variety of responsibilities and functions including clerical and administrative support to the Fourth District Court; recording documents related to property ownership, marriages, and other licenses, as well as recording and publishing minutes and resolutions from public meetings (such as the Board of County Commissioners); auditing funds collected and spent by County offices and issuing annual financial reports and County budgets; and running and supporting elections for local, state, and federal elections. The Clerk's office is also in charge of administering the County's Department of Indigent Services.
- **Expo Idaho:** Expo Idaho is a special events facility located in Ada County near Garden City, and managed by the County. Expo Idaho hosts the annual Western Idaho Fair, as well as many other expositions and trade shows throughout the year.
- **Other Services:** In addition to the services discussed above, Ada County provides services to residents relating to weed and pest control, mosquito abatement, issuing building permits and conducting inspections, reviewing site plans and other development proposals, and surveying, among others. The County also plays a significant role in emergency management, which is discussed further in the "Hazards and Risks" chapter of this report.

TRANSPORTATION

Roads and Highways

- **Responsible Entities:** The construction and maintenance of roads and highways in Ada County falls to the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), which covers state and federal highways and interstates, and the Ada County Highway District (ACHD), which is in charge of all other streets and roads in the County.
- **Major Highways:** The most notable roadway in Ada County is Interstate 84, which travels east-west through Ada County. Other

major highways include US highway 20, US highway 26, state Highway 55, state Highway 44, state highway 16, state highway 69, and state highway 21.

- **TLIP/Livable Streets for Tomorrow:** As a result of the Blueprint for Good Growth process, ACHD adopted a Transportation and Land Use Integration Plan (TLIP), also known as Livable Streets for Tomorrow. Under this plan, ACHD worked with the communities in Ada County to create a more context sensitive functional classification system for the streets in the County. Detailed in the Livable Street Design Guide, the new system creates specific cross-sections and policies for arterials, collectors, and local streets that pass through commercial corridors, downtowns and town centers, residential neighborhoods, industrial districts and rural areas. In addition to automobile travel lanes, the guidelines include policies for multimodal transportation such as bike lanes and sidewalks.
- **Variations in Travel Time:** Comparing travel times at peak or congested periods to periods of free flow or ideal conditions, COMPASS determined that in 2014, 3.7% (or 13.6 miles) of east or northbound roads evaluated in the Treasure Valley had high levels of congestion, meaning that on freeways, suburban streets, and urban streets it took 1.5, 2.25, and 2.5, respectively, times the amount of time to travel north or east on these streets during peak time. While there was more congestion along streets in the Treasure Valley in 2014 than in the past two years, it is lower than the 12 year average of 4.3%. Heading west or southbound, 5.2% of evaluated streets had high levels of congestion. This was fewer roads than in 2013, and barely lower than the 12-year average of 5.3%.
- **Areas of Major Congestion:** Hotspots for congestion in Ada County include I-84 between Boise and Meridian, Front Street between US 20 and Capital Boulevard in Boise, Overland Road between South Roosevelt Street and South Orchard Street, and along State Street between 27th Street and Veterans Memorial Parkway, between North Pierce Park Lane and ID 44, and through Eagle.

Railroads

- **Union Pacific:** A number of railroad lines travel through Ada County. The main rail line, owned by Union Pacific, travels through Ada County by way of Kuna. Boise and Meridian are linked to the system through trunk lines.

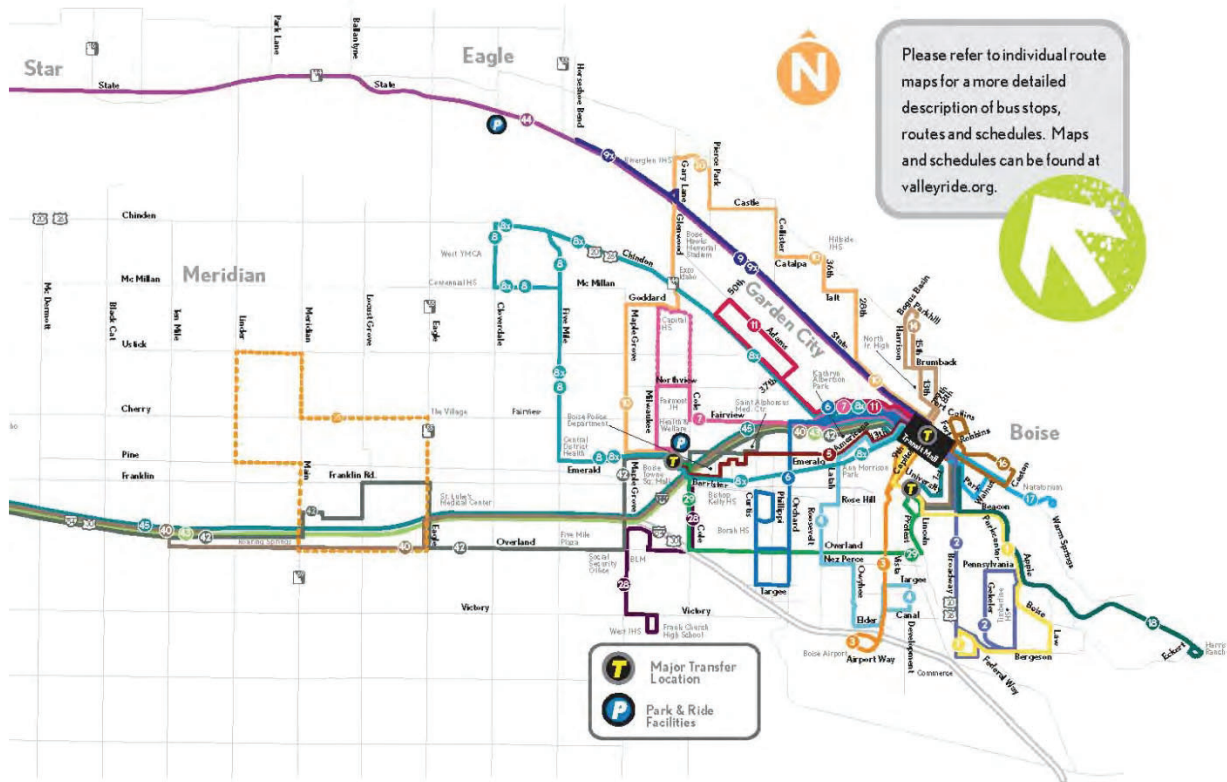
Public Transportation

- **Service Provider:** Public transportation service is provided to residents of Ada County by Valley Regional Transit (VRT). Its main

service is known as Valley Ride, which has 16 fixed routes in Boise and Garden City.

- **Routes:** 5 intercounty routes provide transit services between Ada and Canyon Counties, connecting Boise, Eagle, Meridian, and Star to Caldwell and Nampa in Canyon County. In addition, the Ada County Highway District operates Commuteride, a van sharing program for commuters who begin or end their trips in Ada County.

VALLEY RIDE TRANSIT ROUTE MAP



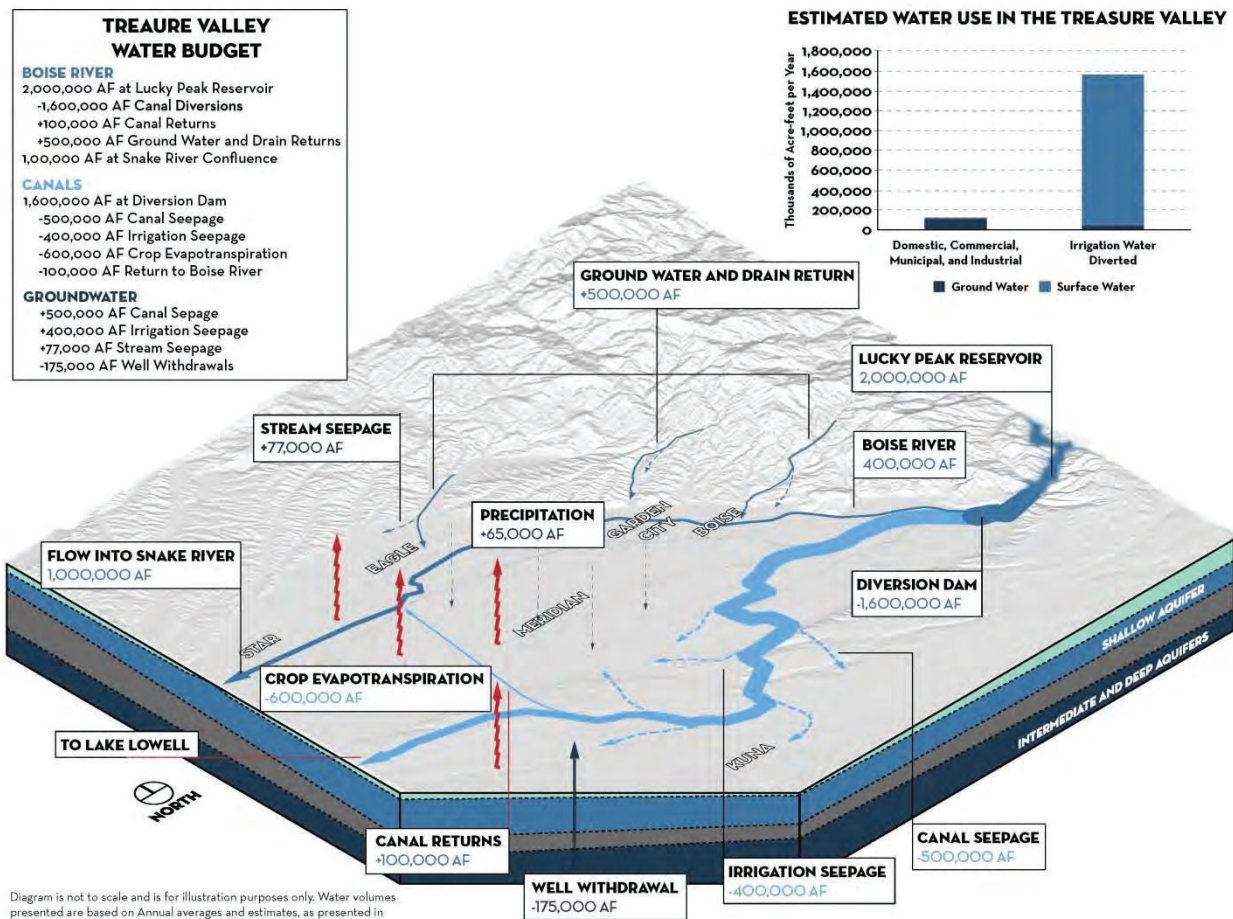
Source: ValleyRide, Valley Regional Transit

Transportation Needs and Funding

- **Transportation Costs:** According to COMPASS’s Communities in Motion 2040 long-range plan, the transportation system in Ada County and Canyon County will require around \$9.7 billion to maintain the current system and meet the demands of new growth by 2040. However, only around \$5.4 billion will be available from federal, state and local sources over this period, leaving a shortfall of \$4.3 billion.
- **Funding Source Breakdown:** Approximately two-thirds of funding for roads in Ada County comes from local sources, one-quarter from state sources, and the remainder from the federal government.

- **Taxes and Impact Fees:** Property taxes levied by the ACHD are the single largest source of funding for roads in the County, although COMPASS predicts that by 2025 impact fees collected by ACHD will become the largest source of funding. Thanks to these sources, especially impact fees, COMPASS predicts that ACHD should have enough funds to expand the roadway system as needed over the next 30 years, in addition to maintenance.
- **Transit Funding:** VRT, on the other hand, will face funding shortfalls starting as early as 2017, according to COMPASS. This means the transit agency will have no funds to expand services, and faces operating shortfalls of \$2.6 million in 2020 and \$34.2 million in 2040.

WATER USE IN THE TREASURE VALLEY



Source: Treasure Valley Aquifer Comprehensive Management Plan

WATER AND SEWER

Supply of Water

- **Sources:** Water in Ada County and the Treasure Valley comes from one of two sources: groundwater or surface water.
- **Drinking Water:** Approximately 95% of the drinking water in the Treasure Valley comes from groundwater wells, which take

advantage of the Treasure Valley Aquifer System, pulling water from shallow, intermediate, and deep aquifers that exist below the ground.

- **Farming and Irrigation Water:** 97% of water used for farming and irrigation comes from surface waters, such as the Boise River or canals. The majority of surface water is stored in the Lucky Peak Reservoir, before being released into the Boise River or diverted into canals.
- **Domestic Wells:** There are at least 16,600 domestic wells in Ada County, which provide water to homes not on a water supply system. However, groundwater levels are not consistent across all of Ada County, and access to groundwater is limited in some areas, such as in the Southeast and in the north foothills, according to the Idaho Department of Water Resources.
- **Water Storage and Control:** The supply of surface water in Ada County is controlled through a system of 4 reservoirs and various canals which provide both water storage for irrigation and flood control along the Boise River.
- **Reservoirs:** Three reservoirs (Anderson Ranch, Arrowrock, and Lucky Peak) are fed by the Boise River, and are operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a unified system. The fourth reservoir (Lake Lowell) is fed by the New York Canal (which diverts water from the Boise River) and is independently operated.
- **Canals:** There are approximately 1,170 miles of irrigation canals in the Treasure Valley. During the irrigation season (roughly April-October) there is not enough water flowing in the Boise River to meet irrigation demands, and must be supplemented by water stored in the reservoirs.
- **Future Needs:** It is difficult to determine how much water is available in Ada County's water system and how much demand for water will grow in the future. While the exact amount of water needed to meet future demands varies by analysis, all point to the fact that demand will increase as additional growth occurs in Ada County and elsewhere in the Treasure Valley.
- **Proposed Treasure Valley Aquifer Management Plan:** According to the recommendations in the Proposed Treasure Valley Aquifer Management Plan drafted by the Idaho Water Resources Board in 2012, communities and water managers in the Treasure Valley should seek to enhance water data collection and analysis, explore additional storage opportunities and supply sources, reduce demand through conservation, ensure that surface water currently used for irrigation is available for residential use if or when land transitions from agricultural to

residential uses, and to preserve and protect the water delivery infrastructure in the County, such as the system of irrigation canals and ditches.

- **Management Plan Adoption:** Although it was drafted in 2012, the Proposed Treasure Valley Aquifer Management Plan was never submitted to the state legislature for approval due to concerns from members of the Idaho Water Resources Board. As a result, the goals and recommendations established in the proposed plan have not been adopted or included in the State Water Plan.

Water Providers

- **Overview:** A number of municipal and private companies provide water to residential, commercial and industrial consumers. The largest supplier of water in Ada County is United Water Idaho, which provided water to roughly 240,000 people living in Boise, Garden City, and Eagle in 2012. Other water providers include the City of Eagle, the City of Kuna, Capital Water, and smaller systems in the planned communities.
- **Canal and Ditch Providers:** Water is also provided for irrigation by canal and ditch companies. These divert surface water from the Boise River into a series of canals that convey water to the western portions of the County. In all there are 30 irrigation districts served in Ada County, primarily the western portion.

Sewer and Wastewater Treatment

- **Responsibility:** Ada County does not provide wastewater or sewer services to residents. Instead, these functions are the responsibility of cities, special districts, or individual property owners (where septic systems are used).
- **Service Providers:** The City of Boise is the largest provider of wastewater treatment services, and operates two wastewater treatment plants. Other cities with treatment plants include Meridian, Kuna, and Star.
- **Community Systems:** Since Ada County does not provide sewer service, planned communities in the unincorporated County are required to build and maintain their own community systems.

UTILITIES

- **Electricity:** Idaho Power provides residents of Ada County with electricity.
- **Power Rates:** According to a survey by the Edison Electric Institute, Boise residents had the sixth lowest residential power rates among cities included in the survey, per 1,000kWh. Medium commercial customers had the lowest rates, while large

commercial and small industrial customers paid the second lowest rates of the cities surveyed.

- **Sources of Energy:** These low rates are made possible in large part thanks to the utility company's reliance on hydroelectric power. In 2014, approximately 43% of electricity generated by Idaho Power came from hydroelectric sources, the largest of any source of energy. Coal was the next largest, at 35%, followed by wind (11%) and natural gas (8%). In all, well over half of the utility's electricity was generated from renewable sources.
- **Natural Gas:** Natural gas in Ada County is provided by Intermountain Gas Company.

PARKS AND RECREATION

- **Service Providers:** Several agencies and local governments in Ada County provide park and recreational services to residents, including federal and state agencies (like BLM or Idaho Fish and Game), Western Ada Recreation District, the cities of Boise, Meridian, Kuna, Garden City, Eagle, and Star, and the Boise, Meridian, and Kuna school districts. Parks, trails, and open space in unincorporated Ada County is provided by the Ada County Department of Parks and Waterways.
- **Largest Parks and Recreation System:** Boise has the largest parks and recreation system in the County, with over 150 sites and facilities covering around 5,350 acres, or 56% of all parks and recreation lands (excluding public lands) in the County.
- **Park Types:** By size, the 24 regional parks in the County account for 32% of all parks and recreation facilities. Neighborhood parks are the most common park type in the County, with 74 parks located throughout Ada County.

FIRE

- **Service Providers:** Fire services are provided to Ada County residents by both municipal fire departments and special districts.
- **Service Distribution:** The Cities of Boise and Meridian both have their own fire departments, while the smaller cities and unincorporated County are served by 8 special districts.
- **Contract Services:** Many of these districts have agreements with municipal fire departments, and contract their services in an effort to reduce costs and improve services for their constituents (for example, through a Joint Powers Agreement, the North Ada County Fire and Rescue District contracts fire services through the City of Boise Fire Department).

- **Service Coverage:** Federal agencies provide fire protection and management services for the lands they manage. However, the entire County is not included in a fire district, leaving residents who live outside one vulnerable to fires.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Health and Wellness

INDICATOR	ADA COUNTY	IDAHO	USA
Behaviors Influencing Health (as a percentage of the population, self-reported)			
No Leisure Time Physical Activity	16.3%	19.8%	22.6%
Excessive Alcohol Consumption	14.5%	14.7%	16.9%
Tobacco Users	15%	16.6%	18.1%
Inadequate Fruit and Vegetable Consumption	73.9%	76.6%	75.7%
Access to Healthcare (per 100,000 residents or as a percentage of the population)			
Primary Care Physicians	83.9	61.8	74.5
Dentists	79.7	63.9	63.2
Mothers without Prenatal Care in 1 st Trimester	22%	28%	17%
Adults without a Regular Doctor	26%	28%	22%
Living in a Health Professional Shortage Area	0%	67%	34%
Health Outcomes (prevalence as a percentage of the population, self-reported)			
Diabetes	7.5%	8.4%	9.1%
High Cholesterol	39.5%	38.7%	38.5%
Heart Disease	3.5%	3.9%	4.4%
Obesity	24%	28%	27%
Asthma	13%	13%	13%
Poor Dental Health	10%	13%	16%
Reporting Poor or Fair Health	12%	15%	16%
Infant Mortality (per 1,000 births)	5.9	6	6.5
HIV/AIDS (per 100,000 residents)	100.7	63	340.4

Source: Community Health Needs Assessment, www.chna.org

- **Behaviors Influencing Health:** Residents of the County seem to exercise more, smoke and drink less, and eat more fruits and vegetables than residents of Idaho or the United States.
- **Access to Healthcare:** Residents of Ada County also appear to have excellent access to healthcare professionals, although fewer mothers have access to prenatal care during their first trimester than all mothers in the United States, and fewer adults (1 in 4) than in the United States have a doctor or physician they visit regularly.
- **Health Outcomes:** Healthy behaviors and access to healthcare are reflected in the health outcomes indicators. In general, there are fewer instances of diseases and conditions in the County than in Idaho or the United States, and residents report having much lower rates of poor or fair health.
- **HIV/AIDS:** However, the County does appear to have a higher incidence of HIV/AIDS than in the rest of the state, although much lower than in the Country as a whole. In 2010, 100.7 out of every 100,000 residents was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. This rate has increased since, rising to 103.3 per 100,000 in 2012.

Health Facilities and Services

- **Facilities:** Ada County is home to a variety of hospitals, medical centers, and clinics. The two largest general service hospitals in the County are St. Luke's and Saint Alphonsus. Both hospitals operate more than one facility in Ada County.
- **Level of Care:** Saint Alphonsus is the only level II trauma center in the region, and one of the few in the State of Idaho.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Transportation:** Ada County and its cities have less influence over their transportation system than in other communities. While the County is represented on the boards of COMPASS and VRT, the board of ACHD is independently elected by Ada County voters.
- **Traffic and Congestion:** Today, congestion is not a serious issue in the County, although it does affect certain segments of roadway more than others during peak times. However, as funding for transportation investments becomes more scarce at the federal and state levels, and as the County continues to grow, congestion could become an issue in the future.
- **Long-term Transportation Funding:** Impact fees collected by ACHD in Ada County represent an important source of revenue for the district, and should be maintained in order to provide ACHD with the resources it needs to continue maintaining and expanding the County's roadway system as new growth occurs.
- **Water Planning:** A Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan for the Treasure Valley Aquifer System has yet to be adopted by the state legislature or incorporated into the State Water Plan. As population growth continues, demands for water in the region will increase. Understanding available supplies of water in the County and how best to manage them should be a priority for Ada County moving forward.
- **Groundwater:** Access to groundwater is not uniform across all of Ada County, greatly affecting where development is likely to occur. Areas where groundwater is not available are less likely to develop, as servicing these areas with water becomes much more expensive, and developers do not have the option to create their own service district or use domestic wells.
- **Water Demand:** While the surface water storage system in the County has largely been sufficient to meet the demand for irrigation, during drought years the supply is supplemented by groundwater, further placing stress on the ground water supplies (which are also impacted by droughts).
- **Water-Land Use Connection:** Water use in Ada County is closely tied to land use. Agricultural users depend on surface water, while all other users depend on ground water. As less land is used for agriculture and more is converted to other uses, the sourcing of water may need to change to reflect changes in supply and demand.
- **Water Quality:** Water quality across both surface and ground water sources is generally good, but should be closely monitored, especially in areas where groundwater contamination is possible (such as the landfill). Any negative impact to water quality could have wide-ranging consequences to water supply in the County, especially since both the ground water and surface water systems interact with one another, an impact to either could also affect the other.

- **Many Water Providers:** While the water system in the Ada County is one interconnected system over two dozen water companies and irrigation districts use its waters on top of domestic well users, not to mention the users downstream in Canyon County. In the future, greater coordination and collaborative management of the region's water system could be necessary to ensure there is an adequate supply to meet demand and that appropriate conservation measures and best practices are used by all water providers.
- **"Carry Over" Water:** Carry over water, or water left in the reservoirs at the end of the irrigation season, is essential for the sustainability of the water supply. However, the amount of carry over water heavily depends on the amount of snowfall and the irrigation demand that season, and so can vary significantly year to year, especially during periods of drought.
- **Independent Systems:** Water and wastewater services are not provided by Ada County in unincorporated areas. Planned communities are required to provide their future residents with these services, either by contracting with an existing provider, or by creating their own system. However, if these systems are not properly operated or maintained, it could lead to serious issues for County residents living in these developments, as well as raises environmental concerns if wastewater is not properly treated.
- **Utility Costs:** Inexpensive utility prices in Ada County add to the attractiveness of the area for businesses. According to a survey by the Edison Electric Institute, the City of Boise had some of the lowest electricity rates among the cities survey, giving Boise and other areas of Ada County a competitive edge over other similarly situated communities in the Intermountain West, like Reno, Nevada and Salt Lake City, Utah.
- **Health Outcomes:** Although Ada County residents tend to score better on a variety of health indicators than residents of the State of Idaho and the United States, there is room for improvement. For instance, nearly 1 in 4 residents of Ada County has a body mass index (BMI) that qualifies them as being obese, a fairly high percentage of the population.
- **Health Facilities:** Hospitals and medical centers, especially St. Luke's and Saint Alphonsus, are major drivers of both the community's health and the economy. Asides from being two of the largest employers in the Boise-Nampa MSA, these facilities provide residents with quality healthcare. As more of the population of the County ages, the availability of healthcare and health services, especially those geared towards older adults and geriatrics will become increasingly important.
- **Park Usage:** Although individual cities in Ada County provide parks and recreational facilities for their residents, many are used by all residents of the County, no matter where they live. As population grows within the cities and ACIs, use of the County's recreation facilities will continue to rise.
- **Park and Trail Connectivity:** In developing the 2007 Ada County Parks and Open Space Master Plan, the County was perceived to be the proper organization to lead or coordinate development of trail connections to park and recreation opportunities throughout the County.

A scenic landscape featuring a river, dry grasses, and hills under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, white, bold font.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

PHYSICAL SETTING

Topography

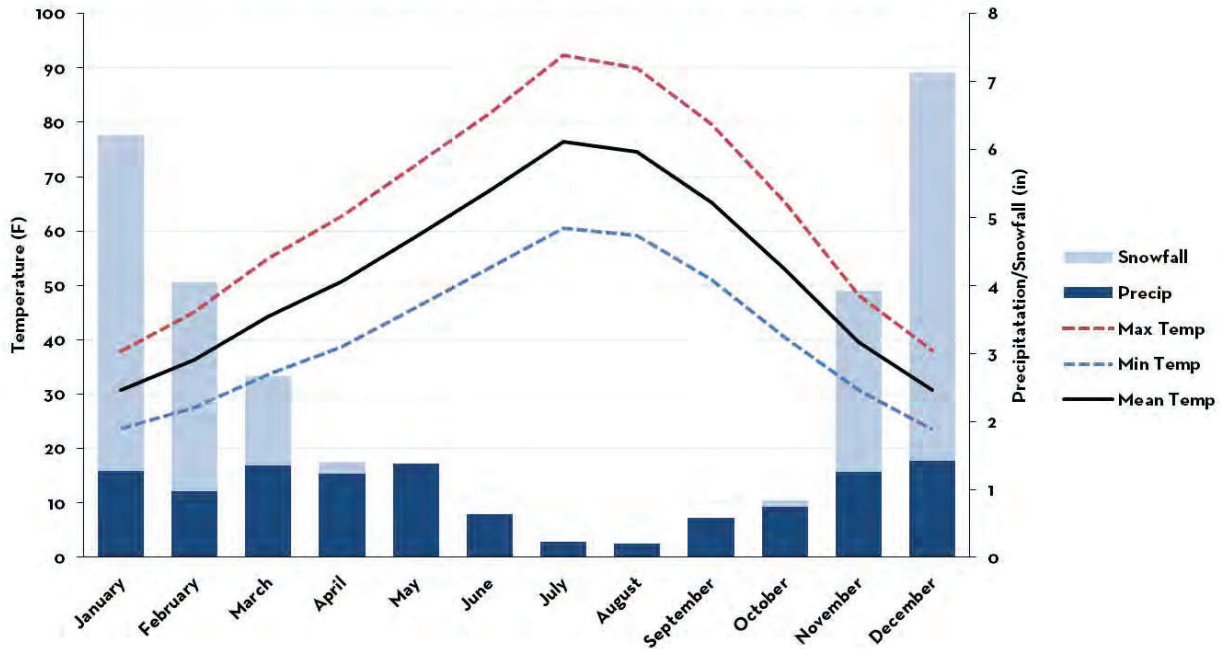
- **Location:** Ada County is located in the Treasure Valley, an area of lowlands bordered to the north by the Boise Mountains and to the south by the Owyhee Mountains. The Treasure Valley is part of the larger Snake River Plains, an east-west band of lowlands crossing southern Idaho, following the course of the Snake River across the state. As a result, much of Ada County is relatively flat, and general slopes downwards to the northwest.
- **The Foothills:** The Boise Foothills, located in the northern and northeastern portions of the County, are the main topographic features in the County. Not as steep as the mountains to the north, the foothills provide a dramatic backdrop to the City of Boise, and are a valued open space and recreational asset to the County's residents.
- **Elevation:** Elevations in Ada County range from a low of approximately 2,253 feet above sea level to a high of approximately 6,016 feet above sea level.

Hydrology

- **Boise River:** The Boise River is the main hydrologic feature in Ada County, and flows west across the northern portion of the County. The river originates east of Ada County in the Sawtooth Mountains, where the north fork and the middle fork of the Boise River meet. The river has a third, south fork, which meets the main fork of the river at Arrowrock Reservoir, east of Ada County.
- **Boise River Watershed:** The Boise River drains an area of approximately 4,016 square miles or 2,570,037 acres. Over half of the land that drains into the Boise River or its tributaries is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, while 32% of the watershed is owned by private landowners, the majority of which are located in Ada County.
- **Snake River:** The Snake River forms part of the southern border of Ada County as it flows through the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. The Boise River flows into the Snake River near Parma, Idaho in Canyon County.
- **Canals:** Numerous canals crisscross the County, diverting water from the Boise River to the west, where it is used to irrigate crops during the summer months. The largest canal is the New York Canal, which diverts water directly from the Boise River below the Diversion Dam, and feeds most of the other canals in the County before flowing into Lake Lowell, in Canyon County.

- **Reservoirs:** There are no natural lakes in Ada County, however the western portion of the Lucky Peak Reservoir, located along the Boise River, falls in the County. A number of smaller reservoirs are also present.

CLIMOGRAPH: BOISE AIRPORT, ID 1985-2014



Source: National Climatic Data Center, NOAA

CLIMATE

- **Climate Type:** Ada County has a cold semi-arid climate, meaning that on average it has moderately hot, dry summers, and moderately cold, snowy winters. Spring and fall are cooler than summer, and tend to be wetter. It is not uncommon to see snow in early spring and late fall.
- **Summer Temperatures:** As recorded at the Boise Airport between 1985 and 2014, the warmest months of the year on average are July and August, with mean daily temperatures of 76 degrees Fahrenheit and 74 degrees Fahrenheit. Max daily temperatures can be quite hot during these months, on average 92 degrees Fahrenheit in July and 90 degrees Fahrenheit in August.
- **Diurnal Temperature Changes:** Daily variations in temperatures can be quite large during the summer months. At the Boise Airport between 1985 and 2014, the average difference between the maximum and minimum daily temperatures was approximately 30 degrees Fahrenheit during July and August.

- **Winter Temperatures:** On average, December and January are the coldest months at the Boise Airport, with an average mean daily temperature of 30 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Precipitation:** Between 1985 and 2014, the Boise Airport received an average of approximately 11 inches of rainfall each year. Rainfall is most common during the winter, spring, and fall. In the summer, the airport receives less than a quarter of an inch of rain each month, the driest part of the year.
- **Snow:** Ada County also sees snow during the winter months. An average of 18 inches falls at the Boise Airport each year, mostly during December and January.

Climate Change

- **Impacts:** The exact impacts of climate change on Ada County are difficult to determine with certainty. Most studies estimate increases in mean monthly temperatures, and that most climate-related events (thunderstorms, droughts, floods, etc.) will be more frequent and severe.
- **Warming Temperatures:** Warmer temperatures also suggest that more winter precipitation will fall in the form of rain rather than snow. This could result in earlier snowmelts, and change the timing of peak flows in streams and rivers in the region.
- **Timing of Snow Melt:** According to the Treasure Valley Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan, earlier melting snow will result in lower summer stream base flows, at a time when demand for surface water for irrigation is greatest.
- **Unpredictable Weather:** Although climate models indicate that Ada County will see more water during wet years, storage of this water is fixed by the capacity of the reservoir system along the Boise River. As a result, residents of Ada County may still face water shortages during dry years, which are also predicted to be drier than they are currently.

ECOSYSTEM

- **Land Cover:** Nearly 40% of Ada County is covered by cool semi-desert scrub and grasslands, characterized by patches of grass interspersed with larger shrubs, such as sagebrush. Plants in this habitat type are well suited to dry, arid climates.
- **Elevational Changes:** The vegetation patterns found in Ada County change with elevation, particularly in the Boise Foothills. While similar to the semi-desert scrub and grasslands found in the lower elevations of the County, shrubs, like sagebrush, are less frequent. Known as a Columbia Plateau steppe and grassland, the vegetation found in the foothills is characterized by a more frequent fire regime.

- **Riparian Areas:** In addition, the gravelly soils in the floodplain of the Boise River support a different set of plants, those of the Columbia Basin foothill riparian woodland and shrubland. Cottonwoods, common along the Boise River, thrive in this ecosystem thanks to the gravel soils, which keep the water table close to the surface.
- **Wildlife:** Ada County is home to many species of wildlife, including deer, elk, mountain lions, badgers, beavers, and a variety of fowl. While the ranges for these species can extend across the entire County, the Boise Foothills are an important wintering habitat for many.
- **Crucial Habitat:** Using the methodology of the crucial habitat assessment tool (CHAT), the State of Idaho has classified areas across the state according to their importance as habitat for species of concern, their landscape conditions, their natural vegetation communities, the presence of wetland and riparian areas, and their importance as habitat for species of economic and recreational importance. Areas prioritized as crucial habitat by this assessment in Ada County are found primarily in the Boise Foothills, but also include riparian areas along the Boise and Snake Rivers.

OPEN SPACE

- **Significance:** Residents across the County value its open spaces and natural areas. Values related to the natural environment and open space are referenced in almost every jurisdictions' comprehensive plans, as well as regional planning documents such as Communities in Motion 2040.
- **Regional Efforts:** Ada County and its cities are involved in open space acquisition and preservation to varying degrees; however no unified effort exists to create a regional system of open space and trails.
- **Open Space Advisory Task Force:** An Open Space Advisory Task Force was formed in 2007 to better coordinate open space preservation activities among the jurisdictions of the County. Its main purpose was to create conservation priorities in the four quadrants of Ada County, identify public priorities for open space acquisition, recommendations for funding or incentives, and to evaluate the potential of exchanging or consolidating existing public lands.
- **Task Force Recommendations:** The task force created a number of priorities and recommendations for open space conservation in the Foothills, along the Boise River, in the southern portion of the County, and in for the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, as well as in the rest of Ada County.

Additional recommendations include the creation of a County-wide Open Space Advisory Committee, creating consistent language regarding open space across the County's and cities' Comprehensive Plans, and to creating a unified set of policies for open space conservation in key areas, such as the Foothills.

- **Ada County Parks, Open Space and Trails Advisory Board:** Per the recommendations of the Open Space Advisory Committee, a County Parks, Open Space and Trails Advisory Board was created, and provides recommendations to the Ada County Commissioners in areas related to county parks, recreational opportunities, public recreation trails, and open space identification and preservation. The advisory board continues to work with other jurisdictions to complete trail and greenbelt connections.
- **Private Organizations:** A number of private non-profit organizations, such as the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, work to preserve open space in Ada County.
- **Birds of Prey National Conservation Area:** A unique open space amenity in the southern part of Ada County is the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Established in 1993, this area was designated a National Conservation Area to protect the cliff habitat along the Snake River that is used by a variety of falcons, eagles, hawks, and owls as a nesting site in the spring. In addition to bird-watching, the area supports a range of recreational activities, such as hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting.


RESOURCE EXTRACTION

- **Sand and Gravel:** There is a long history of sand and gravel extraction in Ada County. There are several sand and gravel pits operating along the Boise River and South Pleasant Valley Road, as well as other locations throughout Ada County.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Boise River Watershed:** Since the Boise River plays such an important role in Ada County, both as a provider of irrigation and drinking water and as a recreational amenity, it is important the County is aware of what is going on elsewhere in the watershed. Most of the watershed is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and other federal and state agencies, which provide fairly strong protections from any uses that could impair water quality.
- **Irrigation Season:** Water demand in the Treasure Valley is highest during the irrigation season, which occurs during the months of April to October. These months are also some of the driest months in terms of precipitation.
- **Snowfall:** Snow is an important part of the water cycle in Ada County. Snowfall helps to replenish water lost to irrigation during the summer, and to refill the reservoirs along the Boise River.
- **Boise Foothills:** Future development in the Boise Foothills should be discouraged to the extent possible. Not only is this area valued as a recreational area by residents of the County, but it is also crucial habitat for wildlife species, it's more prone to wildfires than other ecosystems in the County, and its steep topography increases the risk of landslides, especially during heavy thunderstorms or flashfloods.
- **Open Space:** Ada County is well positioned to coordinate open space preservation and acquisition activities among its cities, however, apart from the 2008 recommendations of the Open Space Advisory Task Force, there has been no formal effort to create a County-wide open space conservation plan.

A photograph of an ambulance station at night. Three white ambulances are parked in a row under a large, illuminated canopy. The canopy has the word "AMBULANCE" written in large, white, illuminated letters across its top edge. The ambulances have "Ada County Paramedics" and their respective numbers (20, 21, and 22) visible on their sides. The scene is lit by overhead lights, creating a bright area under the canopy against the dark night sky.

AMBULANCE

HAZARDS & RISKS

HAZARDS AND RISKS

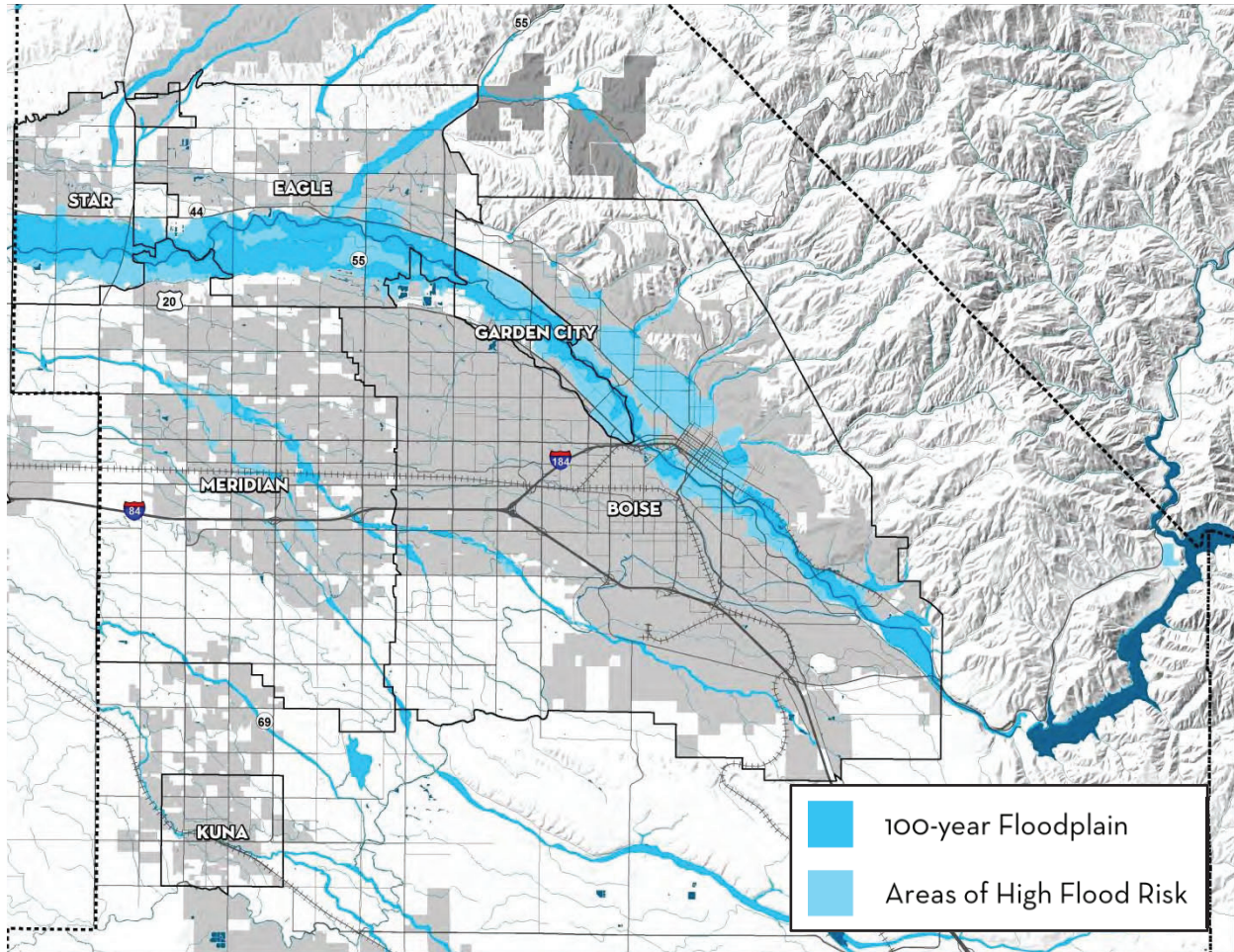
DAM FAILURE

- **Location of Dams:** Dams exist along both the Boise and Snake Rivers, however failure of those along the Boise River pose the most serious risks to the population of Ada County.
- **Impacts:** While a failure is extremely unlikely, the impacts of a dam failure along the Boise River would be severe for the residents of Ada County, and require the immediate evacuation of all low-lying areas in Boise, and almost all of Garden City, Eagle, and Star, as well as cities in Canyon County.
- **Failures Upstream:** A failure of the Anderson Ranch Dam or the Arrowrock Dam (both upstream from the Lucky Peak Dam) would most likely result in a failure of the dams downstream.

DROUGHT

- **Drought:** Drought is always a concern in Ada County, especially for farmers who depend on precipitation throughout the year to supply the water they use for irrigation.
- **Recent Drought History:** While a formal drought emergency was last declared in Ada County in 2005, as of September 2015, all of Ada County was experiencing moderate drought conditions. The County has been under some degree of drought conditions since July 2012 according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.
- **Longer-Term History:** Over the past 15 years, Ada County has experienced some degree of drought or water shortage during 65% of this period.

FLOODPLAIN AND AREAS OF FLOOD RISK



Source: FEMA

FLOODING

- **Risks:** The risk of flooding in Ada County is moderate, although floods in Ada County could have a number of causes/sources.
- **FEMA Map Updates:** While the map above shows areas identified by FEMA as being within a floodplain in Ada County, it should be noted that the agency is currently in the process of revising its floodplain maps. Areas in Ada County identified as being in a floodplain could change depending on the results of this update.
- **Flood Control:** While the flow of the Boise River is largely controlled by the dams further upstream, the river frequently reaches and exceeds flood-stage flows (6,500 cfs or greater) each year, although damage is usually minor, affecting the Greenbelt and agricultural lands along the river. However, the Boise River’s capacity has been increasingly diminished by its damming, causing silt that would otherwise be deposited by flood waters in the River’s original floodplain to be deposited in the river bottom instead.

- **Canal Flooding:** Canals are another potential source of floods in Ada County. The risk of canals flooding is greatest when the canals draw the most water from the Boise River, typically between April and October. Obstructions, breaches, or overflow are the most likely causes of flooding.
- **Foothill Flooding:** Another potential source of flooding in Ada County is one or more of the many tributaries that flow into the Boise River from the Boise Foothills. While small, during heavy rainstorms they can experience flash flooding, and have the potential to flood large areas of Boise, including the downtown.

WILDFIRE

- **Risk:** All of Ada County is at risk for wildfires, especially during years of drought. Wildfires can occur in any given year and the number of acres can be highly variable.
- **Causes:** According to the 2010 Ada County Hazard Vulnerability Analysis, about half of the wildfires in the County are caused by humans, and the other half by lightning strikes.
- **Location of Highest Risk:** Wildfires' risks to Ada County residents is typically highest along the wild-urban interface, or those areas where undeveloped land comes into contact with developed land, typically residential subdivisions and especially in the Boise Foothills.

GEOLOGIC HAZARDS

- **Risk:** Earthquakes are rare events in Ada County. Although the County is located near the Western Idaho Fault System and the Owyhee Mountains Fault System, none of these appear to be active.
- **Damages:** While most buildings built in Ada County over the past 30 years have been designed to resist damage from seismic events, an earthquake could still cause landslides, liquefaction, and/or subsidence in many parts of the County, damaging buildings and infrastructure.
- **Other Impacts:** Landslides and mudflows in Ada County have typically been small, not causing large amounts of damage or affecting a large area. Generally, areas most at risk for landslides are those areas with steep slopes, or where the soil structure is weakest.

OTHER HAZARDS

- **Hazardous Materials:** Hazardous materials pose a risk to residents of Ada County. Not only are such materials manufactured and stored in facilities across the County, but I-84, US-26, and US-20 are major shipping routes that see many trucks

transporting hazardous materials. Pipelines, railroads, and airplanes also transport hazardous materials in the County.

MITIGATION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- **Ada County Emergency Management:** As an organization, Ada County is the primary entity responsible for evaluating risks from hazards in the County, creating recommendations for mitigating identified hazards, and preparing emergency response procedures and protocols. Within the County, these functions are the responsibility of the Department of Emergency Management. Currently, the department is in the process of updating the Ada County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, which was last updated in 2011. In addition, Ada County, working with the cities and special districts, has created a number of emergency response plans for disasters ranging from floods and wildfires, to mass casualties and hazardous material spills. Ada County Emergency Management also provides information to residents regarding how the public can prepare for emergencies and disasters.
- **Evacuation Plans:** Ada County Emergency Management and each of the County’s cities have created evacuation plans to facilitate a coordinated and efficient large-scale evacuation of residents.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Risks from Hazards:** Some degree of risk from both man-made and natural hazards exists throughout all of Ada County, although certain areas, such as areas in a floodplain or on a steep slope, are more vulnerable than others. Ada County's Department of Emergency Management prepares and maintains a county-wide risk assessment, identifying the types or risks in the County, and their likely frequency and impacts. The Department of Emergency Management also maintains response plans, made in coordination with the cities.