

How Boise Is Laying the Groundwork for Idaho's Clean Energy Finance Market

Building a Clean Energy Investment Pipeline in Boise, Idaho

AT A GLANCE

Investment Priorities

Municipal Geothermal Expansion, Rooftop Solar, EV Fleet Transition, Affordable Housing Energy Efficiency, Bus Electrification, Low-Income Weatherization

Pipeline Value

\$426 million across 16 projects — fleet electrification, geothermal, building energy efficiency, rooftop solar, and public transit

Stakeholders

The Nature Conservancy in Idaho; City of Boise; Tetra Tech Inc; LEAP Housing; Ada County Highway District (ACHD); Boise State University; NeighborWorks Boise; EGT Solar; St. Luke's; ICCU (Idaho Central Credit Union); Boise School District; Nuveen Green Capital; El-Ada Community Action Partnership; Community Infrastructure Center (Milken Institute)

Strategic Role.

Market Enabler | Convener

Note: Unlike other communities featured in this series, Boise and The Nature Conservancy participated in the Municipal Investment Fund as a technical assistance recipient, not a direct grantee. The work described here was supported through MIF's TA program.

Community Impacts

The pipeline prioritizes affordable housing providers, public schools across roughly 80 facilities, and community-serving nonprofits — sectors where energy cost burdens are real but financing options have been limited, meaning the communities most in need of clean energy investment have had the fewest pathways to access it to date. No green bank currently operates in Idaho, although ICCU is one financial institution in the State that is actively developing green lending products.

The Path Forward

Expanding C-PACE (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy) adoption among lenders and building owners; exploring an Atlanta-style city-nonprofit structure to convene and coordinate green finance; and moving nine city-scoped solar and geothermal projects from scoping into the development phase.

THE BIG PICTURE

Boise has a lot going for it. The largest municipal geothermal system in the country. A 100% clean electricity goal by 2035. A C-PACE program enacted in 2025. A city government motivated to act and a private sector — healthcare, universities, housing developers, solar installers — that wants to build clean energy projects.

The Challenge: What it doesn't have is a green bank. In most states, a green bank bridges the gap between project interest and project financing — offering low-cost capital, credit enhancement, and technical guidance that lets projects move from concept to construction. In Idaho, offerings of that kind are limited. ICCU, which currently serves one in three Idahoans, is now offering green lending products to the community. C-PACE is on the books but the deals that have closed are few. This all underscores that the clean energy finance infrastructure that other states take for granted is, in Idaho, still being built.

Organizations across Boise's economy want to pursue clean energy projects but share the same barriers: high upfront costs, limited access to low-cost capital, and gaps in technical expertise. Idaho Power's low electricity rates make renewable projects harder to justify on cost alone, and its below-market net metering structure dampens the solar economics that drive private investment in other markets. Meanwhile, municipalities — the most natural anchor for a clean energy pipeline — cannot accrue debt without voter authorization, limiting their ability to use most financing structures directly.

The Solution: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the City of Boise leveraged MIF technical assistance to map what that infrastructure could look like — and to start building it. TNC and the City drew on their own funds to conduct a systematic, cross-sector scan of who wants to build what, what's stopping them, and what financial products could change the calculation. Fourteen structured stakeholder interviews. Two major convening events. A \$426 million pipeline of identified opportunities.



CREATING THE FOUNDATION: INTERVIEWS & CONVENINGS, AND MARKET DIAGNOSIS

14 Interviews and 2 convenings, One Consistent Finding

The interview process — November 2025 through March 2026, spanning housing, education, transportation, healthcare, finance, and industry — surfaced a consistent pattern: organizations include sustainability in their master plans, then cut the green features first when budgets tighten. Not because the lifecycle economics are bad, but because upfront capital is scarce and lenders don't yet have products that fit. The specifics varied by sector. One housing partner cited limited capital for retrofits. A local solar installer described absorbing capital risk during permitting delays because many local banks don't offer solar loan products (of note, ICCU launched a home solar loan earlier this year). A C-PACE capital provider flagged a financing gap below their \$5M floor — exactly the gap green banks fill elsewhere, and exactly what Idaho currently lacks. One healthcare provider expressed a strong interest in sustainability; however, traditional incentives often do not align with the organization's overall financial strategy.

Two events in December 2024 established the coalition's foundation, bringing together leaders in finance, development, clean energy, and affordable housing. A C-PACE presentation to the Building Owners and Managers Association generated genuine enthusiasm — but gaps remain as to how to get building owners to take the next step. C-PACE is relatively new in Idaho, and there's an educational gap as to who qualifies, and for what projects.

Diagnosis and Recommendations

Two headline conclusions: green finance in Idaho is limited but emerging, and business interest is constrained by capital availability more than willingness. One recommendation is for TNC and the City to create a standalone nonprofit — a one-stop shop for green finance market building, connecting projects with financing and building lender confidence across the state. A major structural barrier is that municipalities cannot accrue debt, eliminating most conventional financing mechanisms. The City has scoped nine buildings for solar and geothermal — but can't borrow to get there.



PROJECTS SEEKING CAPITAL

Municipal Geothermal System — Modernization & Expansion | \$40 Million.

The nation's largest municipally owned geothermal system. Modernization and expansion would extend a proven, low-carbon infrastructure asset already serving Boise's core.

Municipal Facility Rooftop Solar | \$3.2 Million | Nine Facilities | 2,207 kW DC.

Nine city buildings scoped for solar. The clearest near-term solar opportunity in the pipeline — ready to move as soon as a financing structure that works within municipal debt constraints is in place.

Municipal EV Fleet Transition | \$67.4 Million.

Non-heavy-duty vehicle electrification across city operations. Capital plan must be set seven years in advance — creating a narrow but known window for engagement.

Affordable Housing — LEAP Housing & NeighborWorks | Early Stage.

LEAP Housing's retrofit and adaptive reuse pipeline and NeighborWorks' solar and geothermal development opportunities are the pipeline's most community-impact-dense sector. Transaction sizes not yet confirmed; both organizations are advancing project scoping.

Solar on Schools — Boise School District | ~80 Facilities.

52 schools with approximately 80 rooftops. Feasibility studies in place, some solar arrays in operation. Some school sites identified as feasible solar candidates.

Additional pipeline includes: Ground-source Geothermal, Renewable Natural Gas at Water Facilities, Pathways and Bike Lane Development, and Low-Income Weatherization.



PROVEN IMPACT & NEXT STEPS

Until now, no organization had systematically mapped the green finance landscape in Boise. The interviews and convenings produced the first cross-sector inventory of who wants to build what, what's stopping them, and what would change the calculation.

C-PACE: The Immediate Lever. C-PACE is Boise's most actionable near-term tool. The program is enacted, Nuveen Green Capital is active, and building owners are interested. The gap is lender confidence — and closing it requires completed deals with documented outcomes that other lenders can point to.

The Long Game: A Standalone Nonprofit. Tetra Tech's recommendation — a standalone nonprofit modeled on Atlanta's city-nonprofit structure — is the long-term institutional answer to Idaho's green bank gap. The coalition built through MIF, the pipeline documented through interviews, and the lender relationships from the convenings are exactly the foundation that institution would need.

The Strategic Opportunity. Boise has a \$426 million pipeline, motivated public and private sectors, C-PACE on the books, and an emerging credit union partner. For partners looking for an early-mover opportunity in a state where the green finance infrastructure is being built right now, Boise is a good place to start.

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