

From: Lee Nellis lhnellis@gmail.com

Subject: Re: Boulder housing

Date: June 26, 2022 at 8:43 AM

To: Thomas Hoyt hoytcamp@gmail.com

Cc: Martha & John Veranth veranth@xmission.com, Dave Conine daveconine2@gmail.com, Caroline Hoyt hoytcottage@gmail.com

LN

Happy Sunday Morning! I hope it is as nice there as it is here.

I see that John has distributed his white paper to the PC. My only comment would have been to add more specificity about the next steps, particularly the educational forum. Having a specific date would make it much easier to recruit speakers. I think there also needs to be an agreement on the agenda. John keeps telling me, and he's right, that we have to be sure the first step is small enough.

I do not believe that traditional zoning map amendments will work in Boulder and appreciate Tom's mentioning the idea of performance standards. They are the way to make this work, allowing a landowner to make a proposal and see how it meets (or fails to meet) the standards. But as everyone privy to this thread knows, those standards will have to permit higher densities. I understand that it would be highly desirable if they also permitted more diverse, but still small-scale, housing types. But I think there is a strategic question to be answered: Would it be easier to sell the idea of higher densities first, independent of housing type? Then hope that someone succeeds with a higher density sfd project that does not cause more than the inevitable friction before adding the possibility of attached units? I don't know the answer to this question, but some things that have been said by PC members lead me to raise it. The American attachment to the single-family home is fading, but only very slowly in places like Boulder.

Setting the specific debate about fire hydrants (based on a long time living and working in rural area, I believe there are other more important fire safety measures, one of which would be having housing that a volunteer fire fighter could afford!), infrastructure is critical, but we need to allow for some small housing projects with what's practical now. I fully agree about the reimbursement provision, which is quite common with municipalities. It probably looks different to a private water company, but it would be helpful.

I have been through this conversation a lot of times, heard all sides, and in the end support a requirement that some portion of a project approved with higher densities be perpetually affordable. Such requirements are not uncommon and I have my own experience in approving what seemed to be reasonably affordable projects that were completely out of reach within a couple of years. From all I hear, I believe that such a provision will be necessary for positive change in Boulder. The question is how to facilitate it. I think that can be done working with the existing housing organizations to address the costs of land, infrastructure, and financing, though the formation of a local housing trust would probably be helpful from a fund-raising and political perspective.

I also think that creative framing is also required. Please take a look at the link below. That project is not unique. One of the earliest and best known housing projects that incorporated a CSA is the Fields of St. Croix near St. Paul, MN. The good thing about the NH example is that it is not near a city of any size. Could what Tom and Caroline were proposing have been sold if it was represented first and foremost as a way of maintaining ag/open space? I don't know. Some of the NIMBYism had little to do with the nature of the proposal. But how things are sold is important. Maybe we need to think about very explicitly combining open space protection and more attainable housing. Its not hard to write a set of standards that do that. What's hard is building the momentum.

In the spirit of creative (and appropriate) framing: We need to stop talking about "clustering." That formulation puts the emphasis on the density of the housing. We should be mindful (and I can tell you that this is how I have changed perceptions) to always talk about open space development.

<https://www.nhcohousing.com/>

On Sat, Jun 25, 2022 at 7:45 PM Thomas Hoyt <hoytcamp@gmail.com> wrote:

John,

Here are some other thoughts on housing accessible to locals solutions.

General Thoughts:

There are clearly physical housing solutions that could help solve the needs but, as you have stated, most of the solutions require more density and or clustering than is currently allowed. As I mentioned in an earlier email, my gut is that it would be possible to get one or two more dense zoning types added to the subdivision ordinances with a lot of careful work but the issue then becomes: where do those uses go? Maybe instead of designating specific zones where those more dense solutions would be allowed, criteria such as you put in place for commercial uses would give a developer some known standards they could rely on.

The other big issue is the development infrastructure required to support any given architecture solution. The fire hydrant issue that surfaced recently is an example. The Town now has road and utility requirements built into the subdivision ordinance that rightly requires a set of standards for development infrastructure. Historically almost none of the existing affordable housing options would come close to meeting the current standards. Having no District or Town system or plan in place for water main, hydrant, and road improvements, the burden for the necessary extensions all falls on the new developer. That tends to exclude individual or small scale developments because there are not enough units to amortize the costs.

You asked what caused us to withdraw our proposal for a clustered affordable lot development on the corner of Burr Trail and Upper Boulder Road/ 100 north. There were really three factors:

1) From a planning perspective it made sense to cluster the housing on the high, less visible and more irregular north side of the

1) From a planning perspective it made sense to cluster the housing on the right, less visible and more irregular north side of the site and make the main access directly across from Blackledge road. Curtis wanted us to access from the Burr trail which would cut the open space agricultural section in two which made it almost impossible to irrigate and added a section of road just to get to the lots. The argument the neighbors made and Curtis adopted was it was too much traffic on 100north. I could have gotten a letter from our traffic engineers saying it would work but I was convinced that we had no chance with City Council without Curtis's support.

2) The mayor said he would only support the clustering of the lots and the requisite zone change if we made the lots permanently affordable. Caroline and I do not believe that is the right answer for Boulder at this point in time and would severely limit the people who would be willing to purchase. We had made it clear from day one that the sales would be limited to existing permanent residents or folks working here who were living outside Boulder. We were working with a group of 16 local serious potential buyers. As with the road situation, without the Mayor's support, it seemed doomed to failure.

3) With the very vocal and inaccurate criticizing from the surrounding "old boys" the younger potential buyers were either scared or intimidated about providing vocal support. At least one PC Board member was threatened after providing positive support in the initial hearing.

We had the project mostly engineered, surveyed, and planned in order to be accurate about what we were proposing and spent just shy of \$40,000 including a non refundable land deposit to get it as far as it went. This is part of the infrastructure cost I am talking about in #2 above that has not historically been part of most developments in Boulder.

Specific Thoughts:

1) I would suggest being a little more definitive in describing the housing types needed. I think are two primary needs: one for seasonal workers and one for people committed to staying but unable to afford what's available.

The seasonal workers have, to a large extent, been the source of some of of Boulder's most committed long term residents. The rental model Blake established with a house (Good Graces) that has multiple bedrooms, central kitchen, and laundry facilities really works for this type of need, especially if it is designed with the use in mind. I believe that she prevailed in the use because it conforms with the existing single family requirements where, to the best of my knowledge, there is no limit to the number of bedrooms. The only thing needed to make this housing type more viable would be to build it on a 1 acre lot not a 5 acre one.

Trailer parks with permanent Septic, water, and electric service can also provide for this need.

The second housing type is owner occupied for existing resident's. John, your memo talks about multi family dwelling in some form. We believe that something like the pinwheel fourplex we illustrated for the housing study two years ago, potentially speaks to this need. The configuration allows for private yards for each unit and could be sold as fee simple lot ownership. It would need a common wall maintenance agreement and a common septic system agreement but otherwise would have separate utilities. This kind of planning or variants can easily be designed to be compatible with existing Boulder architecture and heights.

2) I think both the Water District, for the domestic utility and the Town, for the road system have to do parallel work to develop a plan for expanded infrastructure. There needs to be more predictability in what the systems ideally look like in order to know what to require of developers and to know where it is logical to develop in the future. I am almost sure there would be planning dollars and capital improvement help available to Boulder for the road planning as small rural community.

There is one simple thing the Water District could do today to somewhat ease the cost burden of extending water lines and adding new hydrants. That would be to have a prorata reimbursement agreement with the party who puts in the initial improvements. If a future user taps into those improvements. It would not reduce the up front cost but at least provide the developer with some security that a future user will not take advantage of their work to provide the infrastructure.

We are happy to keep working on this with you if helps advance the agenda for more affordable housing.

Sincerely

Tom

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