

Locally-accessible Housing – July 2022

White Paper for Planning Commission Discussion
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The 2019 general plan includes the goal “To maintain diverse community structure by creating housing opportunities for seasonal workers and low to moderate income individuals.” As a Planning Commission we need to focus on the implementation of this broad housing goal. Housing supply should be both a priority action item for this year and the impact on locally-accessible housing should also be considered as a factor in all discussions about development standards, zoning, and subdivisions.

Background Attachment

Garfield County Moderate Income Housing Plan (2019)

<https://www.garfield.utah.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1056/637195337773130000>

This provides quantitative information regarding housing needs, availability, and demographics that supplements what we have in the Boulder-specific General Plan and Community Survey.

What does “Housing accessible to locals mean financially?”

A common definition for “moderate income” housing is family income less 80% of the area median income, which works out to be about \$21/hr for a full-time year-around job. Using the guideline of approximately 1/3 of income for mortgage, utilities, taxes and insurance implies a moderate income purchase limit of around \$300,000 - \$350,000. The range for USDA subsidized interest self-help loans is \$336,000. Affordable rentals for seasonal workers at local wages are in the range of \$600 to \$1000 per month depending on hours worked per week, room mates, and availability of other income in the off season. The recent rise in mortgage rates has exacerbated the gap between housing costs and local wages.

The Problems

- 1) Under current Boulder ordinances and real estate market conditions the town will continue to see an increasing number of relocating retirees and investor-purchased second homes and decreased availability of housing options for local workers and young families with children.
- 2) Creating new lots under the current Boulder ordinances will not increase the supply of locally-accessible housing options because the one primary dwelling per lot standard combined with five-acre minimum lot size makes new housing unaffordable at current land prices.
- 3) Land owners and real estate investors expect a profit comparable to what they can get in other communities and will not provide lower cost housing without subsidies or

incentives. Currently Boulder is not participating in any of the available federal, state, or private housing subsidy programs and offers no local incentives to potential developers of affordable housing.

4) Measures to restrict creating new subdivision lots will increase prices on existing properties making them less affordable.

5). Measures to provide lower-cost housing options will not benefit local residents if the properties are converted to RSTR use or are quickly flipped to an investor or second home owner.

A Proposal for Discussion

To focus discussion I advocate that the Planning Commission consider recommending ordinance changes allowing higher density housing such as duplexes and four-plexes on clustered lots with the higher density being conditioned on deed restrictions limiting occupancy to persons earning less than 80% of area median income and / or to persons qualifying as local workers. Such deed restrictions are legal in Utah, are being used in other Utah communities, and are essential to prevent the additional housing from becoming investment vacation properties.

Response to Objections

There will be opposition to any proposal to change Boulder land use, but the valid objections can be addressed.

1) This is not the kind of housing I want. Many will say that they do not want to live in a higher density situation. But, buying a dream home on a large lot is not feasible for most individuals unless the person has income or funds from outside the community. What is feasible is increase the supply of affordable rental and starter housing purchase options. This will allow local workers and young families to live in the community until they can afford something better.

2) We do not want apartment complexes in town. Standards can be set so that a multi-family dwelling looks no different than a large single-family home.

3. The town lacks money. There are many funding programs available, and affordable housing units have been built in Escalante and Tropic using a creative combination of these resources.

4. It is not the town's job to provide housing. The town can and should remove ordinance provisions that prevent the creation of affordable housing by the private sector.

5. Increased traffic. Most traffic through town is visitors, not residents. Traffic on secondary roads and streets is an engineering issue that can be managed.

Next Steps

- 1) Within the Planning Commission we need to identify specific topics where members have concerns, questions, or want additional background information. (July and August meetings)
- 2) Planning needs to work with the community to develop support for changes that will facilitate increased supply of housing accessible to local residents and seasonal workers. Achieving progress will require broad support including the town council, employers, local workers, and long-time residents. Once there is support we can engage available resources to work on issues including community-specific priorities, funding, and changes to the land use ordinances. (Ongoing informal outreach, scheduled community meeting after Labor Day, follow up based on initial community responses.)