

MEMO

TO: Boulder Planning Commission
FROM: Lee Nellis, FAICP
DATE: April 16, 2024

RE: Forum Follow-up

This memo presents a range of alternatives for using TDR and/or density bonuses or incentives, as well as opening up the possibility of some attached housing, primarily duplexes. It would be great if PC members could think through this list and be ready to provide direction on which, if any, of these options should be written up as possible zoning code amendments.

Addressing “Over-development.” There was some hesitation about TDRs and density incentives at the meetings last week. Since the community’s conversation has maintained the 5-acre lot as a baseline, why not continue that policy overall, while freeing up enough possibilities to learn what does (or does not) work? Any amendments allowing TDR and/or incentives could be “sunset” when development gets to, let’s say, 225 additional units (50% of Boulder’s approximate buildout at one dwelling per five acres). At that time, a new conversation about the desirable density and pattern of development would be required.

Transfer of Development Right Options

There are a lot of options. I have listed what seems most useful. I have also confined transfers to being from irrigated lands. Transfers from other types of open space might be desirable, but would require more definition. We can discuss transfers from riparian lands, slopes, or views if the PC desires.

- Do not allow TDR.
- Allow TDR from irrigated lands only to parcels where the additional development permitted would be effectively screened by vegetation and/or terrain.
- Allow TDR from irrigated lands only to parcels where the additional development permitted would be effectively screened by vegetation and/or terrain and the resulting lots (or some portion of them or the total number of lots) are dedicated to affordable housing.
- Allow TDR from irrigated lands only to parcels in the MDR. This would require changing the minimum lot size in the MDR.

- Allow TDR from irrigated lands only to parcels in the MDR on which use of the transfer is restricted to affordable housing. This would require changing the minimum lot size in the MDR.

Building Form Options

- Continue to prohibit attached housing, except internal accessory dwellings.
- Allow duplexes wherever a single-family dwelling is permitted. Duplexes do not qualify for ADUs, so this does not change the already permitted density.
- Allow duplexes wherever a single-family dwelling is permitted, but only if they are affordable.
- Allow duplexes only in the MDR.
- Allow duplexes in the MDR if they are affordable.
- Allow multifamily up to ___ units in the MDR.
- Allow multifamily up to ___ units in the MDR if ___ % of the units are affordable.

Incentives for Open Space

Watching people work at the forum led me to realize that a bonus of one lot per 10 acres preserved is probably too much. I still recommend supporting implementation of the general plan by offering a bonus. Bonuses for protecting other types of sensitive open space would also be desirable, but require more definition. We can discuss that possibility if the PC desires.

- Offer an incentive of one additional lot for protecting 5-__ acres of irrigated land, plus one additional lot for each ___ additional acres protected after that.

Incentives for Affordable Housing

Questions about the definition of “affordable” come up at every meeting. No surprise. And then of course, there are the ideas of “attainable” and “workforce housing.” None of the definitions are ever going to be perfect. The question is what’s useful.

It seems to me that sticking with the standard definition of affordable (can be purchased by people who otherwise qualify and make 80-120% of Area Median Income) is most straightforward and consistent with USDA and other housing assistance programs that might help in Boulder. Then, shifting to the idea of workforce housing, I think a conversation about the kind of worker housing that Grand County is experimenting with should be a top priority.

- Offer no bonus for lots dedicated to affordable housing.
- Offer an incentive of one additional lot for each ___ lot/s dedicated to affordable housing.