

City of Arvada Land Development Code Update

Issue Outline #2: Housing and Neighborhoods

April 12, 2018

Contents

- Purpose of this Outline..... 1
 - Generally 1
 - Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan 1

- Strategies for Established Neighborhoods 1
 - Generally 1
 - Residential Conservation Zoning 1
 - Residential Infill Zoning..... 3

- Strategies for New Neighborhoods 4
 - Generally 4
 - Using Density, Open Space, and a Housing Palette 4

- Recommendations..... 4

Housing and Neighborhoods

Purpose of this Outline

Generally

This issue outline is intended to provide a jumping off point to organize and stimulate discussion during the Advisory Committee meeting that is scheduled for April 12, 2018.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan has a number of goals and policies related to housing in new development, redevelopment, and existing neighborhoods. In sum, these goals and policies promote:

- Protecting “stable rural development” and low density areas of the City, and maintaining and improving the quality of existing housing stock in all areas of the City (Goals CC-3 and N-3; Policies CC-3.3, CC-3.4, CC-3.5, CC-3.6, N-3.1, and N-3.5);
- Providing for a variety of housing choices to balance the mix of land uses and provide for a “complete community” and support a variety of different community character types within the City (Goals L-2 and N-4; Policies L-2.1, ED-4.1, CC-1.1, CC-3.6, N-1.1, N-1.2, N-1.3, N-4.1, N-4.2, N-4.3, N-4.4, N-4.5, E-2.1, E-3.6, and “Principles for a Complete Community”);
- Increasing density of housing in certain areas, particularly around transit, bicycle, and pedestrian connections (Goals L-3, L-4, L-5; Policies L-3.1, L-3.2, L-5, ED-4.2);
- Compatible residential infill development (Policy CC-1.3); and
- Improving the affordability of housing (Goals N-1, N-2; Policies N-2.1, N-2.2, N-2.3, N-2.4, N-2.5, N-2.6, N-2.7, N-4.5).

Strategies for Established Neighborhoods

Generally

In many areas of Arvada, there is a desire to maintain the character and scale of the established neighborhoods, and to encourage property owners to reinvest in existing buildings rather than redevelop them. The challenge is to craft regulations that are tailored to that end, while ensuring that property owners who want to make reasonable improvements are able to do so.

The choice of whether to tear a building down and redevelop the site or to improve an existing building is complicated. Where land values are very high and the underlying zoning regulations allow for buildings that are much larger than the buildings that are typically found within the neighborhood, conditions favor redevelopment.

Residential Conservation Zoning

In many of the City’s residential areas that are essentially built-out, there is a common expectation that homes on existing lots will not change very much. Yet, on individual lots, owners may want to make changes to their homes, such as adding a bedroom or bathroom, or even a second floor. The challenge is to ensure that these improvements do not compromise the established character of the neighborhood (and in historic areas, that they also do not compromise the historic appearance of the street).

An effective zoning “tool” for addressing this issue is the residential conservation zone. A residential conservation zone is different from a typical residential zoning district as follows:

- All existing lots and principal buildings in the residential conservation zone are “conforming,” that is, they are considered compliant with the LDC whether they strictly comply with its new standards or not.

- Building coverage is limited, based on the typical building coverage in the neighborhood, plus a few percentage points to allow for reasonable expansions that do not materially depart from neighborhood character.
- Residential building height is limited so that it is consistent with the typical residential building heights in the neighborhood.
- Objective standards are created to allow for setback encroachments or increases in building coverage, in order to allow for expansions of existing buildings that do not unreasonably impose

upon neighbors or the street. These standards would be created to implement the concepts set out in Table 1, below.

Not all neighborhoods have the same character, so different numerical standards will be required in different areas. As such, the residential conservation zone will have a number of sub-zones based on the typical lot characteristics in terms of area, setbacks, and lot width. While existing lots are “conforming” regardless of these standards, new lots (including changes in lot lines, assembly of lots for resubdivi-

Standard to Modify	Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Front Setback	Privacy (visual)	Landscaping; surplus right-of-way
	Utilities	Re-route utilities
	Landscaping	Ensure adequate landscaping using alternative arrangements and landscape materials
	Character / appearance of building mass / relationship to existing pattern	Landscaping, building articulation, color, consistency with other buildings, or landmark potential,
	Parking	Ensure alternative area for parking is available
	Right-of-way protection	If right-of-way protection is needed, avoid significant reductions to front setbacks
Side Setback	Fire protection / emergency access	Alternative emergency access
	Privacy (visual and noise)	Landscaping, fencing, or window placement to ensure privacy; context (use of adjacent property); purpose of structure or building that is encroaching
	Utilities	Re-route utilities
	Character / rhythm of solids and voids / relationship to existing pattern	Landscaping; additional front setback in affected area; building articulation; color; view angles (how much of the view from the right-of-way is occupied by the width of the building); separation from principal building and neighboring buildings
	Light and air to neighboring property	Distance to neighboring building; topography; building orientation (solar access)
	Drainage onto neighboring property	Improve / redirect drainage

Table 1 Basis for Modifying Standards		
Standard to Modify	Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Rear Setback	Fire protection / emergency access	Alternative emergency access
	Privacy (visual and noise)	Context (use of adjacent property); purpose of structure or building that is encroaching
	Utilities	Re-route utilities
	Landscaping	Ensure adequate landscaping using alternative arrangements and landscape materials
	Parking (alley-loaded)	Mitigate impact on required parking
	Safety and function of alley	Visibility to and from alley
	Light and air to neighboring property	Distance to neighboring building; topography; building orientation (solar access)
	Drainage into alley or onto neighboring property	Improve / redirect drainage
Building Coverage	Impervious surface / storm-water runoff	Stormwater improvements
	Character / appearance of building mass	Landscaping, building articulation, color, context (e.g., corner or mid-block), building volume, consistency with other buildings, or landmark potential,
Building Height	Character / appearance of building mass	Architecture “fits” into context; amount of mass over permitted height is not visually overwhelming; mature landscaping or smaller buildings hide additional mass from street and neighboring properties; topography; building volume; setbacks or height planes reduce impact of height
	Privacy (visual)	Windows do not overlook neighboring back yards
	Fire protection (for very tall buildings)	Fire protection equipment is available

sion, or subdivision or existing large lots) would have to meet the minimum standards of the sub-zone.

As to setbacks, while existing buildings are also “conforming” (from a zoning perspective), development on vacant lots, or redevelopment of existing buildings, would have to meet the setback requirements of the applicable sub-zone.

Residential Infill Zoning

In other areas, there may be an expectation that the existing homes will, in the relatively near future, be

either partially or completely torn down to make way for significantly larger (and potentially more dense) buildings.

A strategy that is similar to residential conservation can be used in these areas, but in order to promote redevelopment, the bulk standards must be calibrated to the products that are desired for the neighborhood. A residential infill zone would be created to fill this need.

The residential infill zone can take several forms. It could simply allow for greater building coverage

and height, while restricting land use to the types of residential uses that are already there (e.g., single-family detached); or it can allow for a variety of new housing types to be developed (e.g., conversion of single-family homes into multiplexes, demolition of single-family homes and replacement with duplexes or townhomes, etc.). The committee will discuss whether such a strategy is needed anywhere in Arvada, and if so, now the neighborhood infill zone should be set up to fit the needs.

Strategies for New Neighborhoods

Generally

New neighborhoods are a different animal than existing neighborhoods. In an existing neighborhood, there is often great sensitivity to change. In a new neighborhood, there are choices to be made with respect to street and lot layout, housing types, and amenities.

To promote the comprehensive plan objectives of allowing for a variety of housing types at a variety of price points, residential zoning districts could be much more flexible than the existing LDC's approach.

Using Density, Open Space, and a Housing Palette

Currently, most of the residential zones in the LDC provide for a minimum lot size for single-family residential or duplex (if allowed) housing. Where developers want to include a variety of housing types, they typically use the planned unit development process instead of a "straight" residential zone. That process is relatively long and complicated.

The strategic assessment recommended that the

City consider a strategy that uses density, open space, and a housing palette to allow for a variety of housing types without requiring a planned unit development approval.

The system works like this:

- Each residential zone has a maximum density, so that a developer can calculate how many dwelling units will be allowed in a new development (the "unit count").
- Each residential zone has a minimum amount of required open space (to be determined based on the desired character for the zone) that will not be used for building lots.
- On the *buildable* land, the developer may select from a variety of housing types in a "housing palette" that specifies the lot area, lot width, setbacks, and maximum height for each type of housing.
- Site design standards ensure that at the edges of the new development that are not collector or higher-order streets, there are appropriate transitions to existing development. Such transitions could include either the use of a comparable lot pattern (e.g., edge lots that are like the lots that abut them on the rear lot lines) or the installation of a landscaped bufferyard along the perimeter of the development.

Recommendations

- Create a residential conservation zone with sub-zones that reflect typical neighborhood conditions in Arvada;
- Consider whether a residential infill zone is needed;
- Create residential zoning districts that use density, open space, and a housing palette to allow for increased flexibility in subdivision design without the need for planned unit development approvals.