



HOUSING BOULDER WORKING GROUP SUMMARY

MAINTAIN THE MIDDLE

GOAL:

Provide a greater variety of housing choices for middle-income families and Boulder's workforce.

KEY THEMES:

- The group discussed the middle income data at length and requested additional information. This can be found on the [updated Fact Sheet](#) for Maintain the Middle. They ultimately concluded, that although "middle income" can be difficult to define, key takeaways are that there has been a loss of middle income households and there's a gap in available housing "between the extremes," between low and high incomes. One member advocated a price elasticity study to determine whether increasing housing supply actually makes housing significantly more affordable given the effect of increasing number of jobs on the cost of housing.
- In regard to evaluating tools, the group discussed the importance of identifying any tool's costs and benefits and also considering its impacts on everyone, including current residents. The possibility was brought up of putting any new initiatives to a popular vote. The group agreed that broad community support should be one of the tool screening criteria.
- Additionally, the group favored tools that would provide a variety of housing choices to meet the diverse needs of middle income people, would support alternative transportation and would be sustainable.
- The group did "thumbs up" polling on two fundamental questions that could influence their individual thinking about each tool:
 - Do you generally support tools that increase the supply of housing, or tools that focus on preserving existing housing and its affordability, or a combination?
All eight members present at the meeting (four absent from meeting) gave thumbs up to a combination. One additional member not present at the meeting provided a written comment opposed to increasing the housing supply unless 1) new development pays its own way for all facilities and services it uses, 2) the city stops creating additional demand for housing by adding more employment space, and 3) middle income affordability is maintained over time.
 - Do you think city funds should be used to subsidize middle income housing, or should that funding come from other sources, or a combination?
Five of eight members present gave thumbs up to a combination and three others gave thumbs up to only non-city funding. An additional member not present at the meeting provided a written comment that impact fees on development should pay 100 percent of the true cost of providing the middle income housing for which the development creates demand, and that any city funding should be spent on only permanently affordable units.



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SHORTLIST OF TOOLS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:

The group “dot voted” (nine of 12 members) to create this short list of tools for further consideration, with the following comments:

Land Use Designation and Zoning Changes

Cooperative Housing

- Co-Housing only got one dot (voting was limited to five dots each person), but should be considered part of Co-op Housing

Occupancy Limits

- Already happening, make it legal and better enforce nuisance code
- Could be treated as a type of cooperative housing, or could be differentiated from it
- Makes better use of existing houses and densities, and is a good use of land

Height Limit

- Could mean adding more height in general throughout city by adding one or two stories to existing one-story buildings; and/or could mean allowing up to 55' in select places or even over 55'
- Higher buildings are more energy- and land-efficient
- Needs to be considered in conjunction with density and setbacks

Accessory Dwelling Units/Owner's Accessory Units

- Require them to be permanently affordable
- Look at the whole range of amendments to current restrictions, e.g., the current size limit numbers seem arbitrary

Bonuses for Higher Affordability and Certain Housing Types

The group agreed (eight of 12 members present) that of the above tools, these would have the most impact:

- Land Use Designation and Zoning Changes
- Occupancy Limits
- Height Limit

Also, individual members were asked to state their favorite one or two tools and why; their responses are posted online under [Meeting #4 Notes](#).