

Summary of Actions to Date on Affordable Housing (Follow up to the Workforce Housing Task Force Report)

In early April 2011, City Council voted to repeal the City's Inclusionary Zoning program, which required developments to provide 10% of the housing they built as affordable to residents at or below 80% of the Area Median Income for for-sale homes and at or below 50% of the Area Median Income for rental homes. The repeal removed the building requirement and allowed all affordable home owners in the Program to be released from their Period of Affordability.

In May, 2011, Council approved the seating of a Task Force to "look at establishing a new Affordable Housing Program to replace the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance." Former Mayor Baum indicated the Task Force should "make sure everyone is a winner in the process and the recommendations that come out of it."

Members were to include representatives from the lending community, local developers/builders (rental and for sale), business community, real estate, non-profit builders/developers, Longmont Boards/Commissions (Planning & Zoning, Housing and Human Services Advisory Board, Senior Citizens Advisory Board, and the Affordable Housing Technical Review Group), a Workforce Board member, Boulder County Human Services, and three homeowners who purchased through an affordable home buyer program.

The purpose established by the Task Force was to: Determine the need for affordable housing in Longmont to house our work force and make recommendations to Council on how to address that need.

Housing Needs Analysis

The City funded the work of a housing consultant – Community Strategies Institute – to determine the housing needs in the community and to make recommendations and draw conclusions from the data provided. This work also compared the City of Longmont, its needs and its available housing to four other local communities to determine how Longmont may affect those communities and how they may affect Longmont in the areas of housing availability and costs.

Meetings with Council to Gain Direction and Specificity on how Best to Address Affordable Housing

May 21, 2013 – Presentation of Workforce Housing Task Force Recommendations to Council

August 6, 2013 - First Follow-up to Workforce Housing Task Force Recommendations - the recommendations of the Task Force on Rental Housing, Homeownership and Meeting the Needs of the Times/Coordinating a Sustainable Approach to Affordable Housing were to be reviewed and discussed in more detail along with information on programs the city is already operating that addresses these recommendations. – Item was pulled and new approach outlined in Sept. 17 Council Communication.

FLOOD

September 17, 2013 – New approach outlined as an info item and more time requested to prepare in light of the flood and to determine its impacts.

August 19, 2014 – Outlined changes to the housing market in light of the flood and provided significant information on what the City had in place to address and encourage affordable housing. Directed to bring back more info on Best Practices and all options available to us for a more comprehensive look.

May 12, 2015 – During the interim period, contracted with EPS to research and provide information on affordable housing and how it can best align with and tie-in to the Envision Longmont (Comprehensive Plan update). Updated housing cost figures and impacts since the flood, compared to surrounding communities, presented what Longmont is facing, updated housing gaps, sought direction on “catch up” or “keep up,” discussed mandates vs. incentives.

June 30, 2015 – Provided Council with an analysis of regional and national best practices, further refined targets for “catching up” and/or “keeping up”, evaluated the incentive and/or mandate approaches based on direction received, identified and recommended policy tools and recommended financial tools to address goals.

October 20, 2015 - Looked at local Construction Defects Law, explored a targeted inclusionary housing approach (denied), programs/policies to preserve existing affordable housing.

May 17, 2016 – Presented final areas of Incentive Production Tools (fee waivers, density and/or height bonuses, modifications to development standards, by-right approval of incentives) and Revenue Generating Tools (different taxes, fees, etc.) to add dedicated funding to the Affordable Housing Fund.

- Set Longmont’s goal to make 10% of all housing permanently affordable.
- Interested in exploring Sales Tax, no to all other fees/taxes presented as options; will consider incremental increases to transfer from General Fund to AH Fund during annual budget process
- Approved options of height and density bonuses in appropriate areas
- Approved “by-right” administrative approval of bonuses/fee waivers
- Did not approve a policy to provide city-owned surplus land first for AH development
- Changed period of affordability for affordable rental housing from 20 to 30 years.

Next Steps: Prepare code changes and other actions to be brought back to Council for formal action. Code changes to set height and density bonuses and to provide administrative approval for affordable housing will be included as part of the changes to enact the Envision Longmont updates and changes. Exploration of Sale Tax for 2016 ballot or 2017 ballot will begin.

Other Efforts

Envision Longmont – The 18 month Comprehensive Plan update for the City is about concluded. Affordable housing is included in many areas of the document, most prominently in the section titled: Housing, Services, Amenities and Opportunities for All. Many of the other sections, however, reference the need for higher density and a mix of housing types to allow for greater housing diversity and options as well as specifically supporting the need for affordable and accessible housing in development, redevelopment and in Areas of Change.

Regional Discussions – A working group made up of Boulder County, City of Boulder and City of Longmont, and all three Housing Authorities have met to lay out some bold and effective measures to increase and maintain the affordable housing supply in Boulder County. Including: establishing production targets, engaging the private sector in the creation of affordable housing, increasing production by non-profit and housing authority providers, garnering new resources/funding for local affordable housing, and preserving existing inventory. Presentation of draft recommendations will be made to local stakeholders for eventual adoption by the Boulder County community(ies).

HOME Consortium – changes made to the way HOME funding is distributed took effect in 2015. Instead of each participating community receiving a small amount of funding each year, we will be rotating the full amount of funding to each community every fourth year. Longmont will receive the funding in 2016. This allows for a larger investment in one housing development allowing us to reach much lower incomes and populations.

Allocation of Longmont's CDBG funding - In 2016, Longmont approved and awarded all of its CDBG funding for affordable housing projects and programs including continued funding of its Housing Rehabilitation Programs, the Housing Counseling Program, and the approval of support services to The Suites clients, Rehab of The Suites to add 11 new studios/1 bedroom apts., funding for 2 new construction affordable rental developments both for seniors (providing 77 new units).