



**CITY OF BOULDER  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

**MEETING DATE: August 17, 2023**

**AGENDA TITLE:**

Consideration of a motion to accept the July 27, 2023 Study Session Summary regarding the Use Table and Standards Update and Discussion on Neighborhood Center Changes.

**PRESENTERS:**

Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager  
Brad Mueller, Director of Planning & Development Services  
Charles Ferro, Senior Planning Manager (Development Services)  
Karl Guiler, Senior Policy Advisor  
Lisa Houde, Senior City Planner

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This agenda item provides a summary of the July 27, 2023 study session on the Use Table and Standards project. The purpose of this study session was to update the City Council on the status of the project and to discuss major focus areas related to neighborhood centers.

Key takeaways from the study session discussion were:

- **Streamlining approval process for restaurants:** City Council supported staff's proposal to streamline the standards and approval process for restaurants. Several council members encouraged staff to go further with streamlining and to simplify regulations in the University Hill General Improvement District as well.
- **Allowing duplexes and townhomes on ground floor by-right in the BT and BR zoning districts:** Several City Council members expressed concern about this potential change and the potential impact on areas generally prioritized for retail or commercial uses.
- **Prohibiting vehicle-related uses in the Downtown zoning districts:** City Council did not view this as a necessary change as part of this project as there are not many of these uses currently.
- **Other potential changes to support walkable and accessible neighborhood centers:** Council members were generally supportive of most proposed changes, with some concerns expressed about the necessity of changes to lodges/clubs and hostels.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

### Suggested Motion Language:

Staff requests council consideration of this summary and action in the form of the following motion:

*Motion to accept the July 27, 2023 Study Session Summary regarding the Use Table and Standards Update and Discussion on Neighborhood Center Changes*

## ANALYSIS

Staff provided a background on the Use Table and Standards project, as well as a detailed summary of past input related to the project and an overview of the engagement efforts currently underway. The remainder of the staff presentation was divided into the four key questions for council. Council asked questions and discussed potential changes structured around the key questions identified in the staff memo.

City Council comments and input included:

### **Question #1: Restaurants**

Does City Council have any comments related to potential changes that would streamline the approval process for restaurants?

- Staff should look to go even further with streamlining the regulations.
- Look at opportunity to make food truck regulations more flexible – often these are start-ups or support immigrant business owners, can provide more restaurant diversity.
- The allowable size by-right needs to be a substantial and meaningful increase to really make an impact.
- Question about whether we can prohibit chain restaurants in particular.
- Several council members encouraged staff to make similar changes to simplify restaurants on the Hill as well.

### **Question #2: Duplexes and townhomes in the BT and BR zoning districts**

Does City Council have any comments on the allowance of duplexes and townhomes on the ground floor in the BT and BR zoning districts?

- Several council members expressed some concern and stated they were conflicted about whether or not to allow duplexes or townhomes on the ground floors by-right in areas where retail and commercial uses are prioritized. They thought this may not need to be a part of this project.
- If areas outside of neighborhood centers become more dense, this may not be necessary.
- Seems to be on the right track, but would not make this change in the BR zoning district, which is some of our most intense areas. Confine changes only to BT.
- One Councilmember would like to see these take the place of empty storefronts. Could be gentle infill that diversifies very dense areas of the city.
- Ensure we are creating communities that support a mix of incomes.

**Question #3: Vehicle-related uses in the Downtown zoning districts**

Does City Council have any comments regarding prohibiting vehicle-related uses in the Downtown zoning districts?

- Several council members expressed reluctance to make this change, may be a step too far for this project and attempt to fix a problem that does not exist.
- Not many exist in the downtown, don't feel comfortable making this change.
- Ensure that electric vehicle charging would not be impacted.
- Drive thrus can provide important service for people with accessibility and mobility challenges, or for older adults.
- Pushing all of these further out could potentially increase vehicle miles traveled if people cannot access them nearby.
- One council member expressed support for the change if it is limited to the city core only, but also said it is not really a problem that needs to be solved.
- Fast food also performs a function for the community. Not sure the nexus of these changes with supporting walkability of neighborhood centers.
- We generally should be making things less burdensome with this project.

**Question #4: Other potential changes**

Does City Council have any other comments on any of the other potential changes to support walkable and accessible neighborhood centers (15-minute neighborhoods)?

- Not sure that changes to clubs or lodges are necessary. These are typically exclusive, may not support walkability of the general neighborhood.
- Skeptical about needing changes for hostels as not sure there are any in Boulder.
- Excited about changes, particularly to the Mixed Use zoning districts – the lack of retail on North Broadway will especially be helped and goes in a great direction.
- We have very limited spaces for events, like the changes to museums and theaters. Look at other arts organizations as well.
- Hope to eventually get back to 15-minute neighborhood conversation within residential zoning.
- Support theater, museum, musical performance spaces changes.
- Look to where community centers allowed – make more community connection spaces.
- Potential future council priority to reimagine Basemar.

**NEXT STEPS**

Based on the feedback from council, staff will move forward with drafting an ordinance and continue public engagement efforts. Staff anticipates bringing an ordinance to Planning Board for their recommendation and public hearing in mid-August, and first reading at Council in October.