

Sentiment Analysis: Lakewood Planning Commission Meeting (April 23, 2025)

Important Clarification: This is a **Planning Commission meeting** (not City Council), focused on the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance rewrite. Affordable housing is discussed as ONE component among many broader land-use issues.

Overall Sentiment: Cautiously Progressive with Local Opposition

Key Themes Re: Affordable Housing

Planning Commission & Staff: Generally Supportive

Positive Indicators:

- **Chair's Vision:** Strong emphasis on "diversity of housing types" and "income diversity through housing" as comprehensive plan goals that should translate to zoning
- **Parking Minimums:** Multiple commissioners (Buckley, Williams, Griblioneus) support reducing/eliminating parking requirements to lower housing costs
 - Commissioner Buckley: Detailed analysis showing 27% of city already exempt under state law, suggests going further
 - Staff confirms this could significantly reduce development costs
- **Housing Type Flexibility:** Support for allowing duplexes, triplexes, and ADUs in traditionally single-family zones
- **Maximum Building Sizes:** New limits designed to prevent circumventing state law while still allowing diverse housing (responding to HB 24-1007)

Key Quote from Chair:

"Walkability in neighborhoods is massively important... we talk about diversity of housing types as a critical component of income diversity in neighborhoods... those three concepts don't come through to me as clearly in the zoning code as I think they should"

Neighborhood Opposition: The Milestone Property Controversy

Strong Resistance: Multiple Alameda Homes residents opposed rezoning 16.5-acre Milestone property from R2 (single-family) to higher density:

Concerns Raised:

- Property sat vacant for 20 years because developer (Milestone) wants maximum profits through high-density apartments
- **Height:** Initial proposal allowed up to 96 feet (with incentives); even revised 35-60 foot limits seen as excessive
- **Traffic:** Only 2-3 access points to neighborhood
- **Character:** "We love our neighborhood... sensibly that needs to be kept"
- **Process:** Complaints about lack of neighborhood meetings/notification

Resident Quote (Sean Flaio):

"We are Colorado native family, two young kids... I cannot allow the zoning for anything over a two-story building to pass"

Staff Response:

- Property identified as "mis-zoned" - single-family zoning on arterial roads isn't practical
 - Suggested compromise: Lower to "Residential Mid-Form" (35-45 ft) instead of "Mixed-Use Residential" (60 ft + incentives)
 - Acknowledged this has been contentious for 20+ years
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Other Housing-Related Discussions

State Law Impact (HB 24-1007)

- New law prohibits limiting number of unrelated people in single-family homes
- Staff response: Limit maximum house sizes to prevent 16,000 sq ft homes with 20 bedrooms
- Proposed caps: 2,500-3,250 sq ft depending on zone
- Would make ~2,000 homes (about 6% of housing stock) "non-conforming" but grandfathered

Sustainability vs. Affordability Tension

- Lakewood Advisory Commission proposed requiring electrification/heat pumps in residential
- Chair expressed concern about affordability impacts
- **Commissioner Williams:** Wants natural gas restrictions but concerned about implementation

Mixed-Use Development

- Historical challenge: Getting actual commercial uses in "mixed-use" zones (mostly just residential being built)
 - Parking requirements may be driving this
 - Some support for removing commercial parking minimums in transit-oriented areas
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Sentiment by Stakeholder

Group	Sentiment	Key Position
Planning Commissioners (majority)	Supportive	Want more aggressive affordability measures (parking, diversity, walkability)
Planning Staff	Pragmatically Supportive	Balancing state mandates, market realities, and community input
Alameda Homes Residents	Strongly Opposed	To density increases on Milestone property specifically
Equestrian Community	Not focused on housing	Primarily concerned about agricultural preservation
Sustainability Advocates	Supportive but concerned	Want electrification without harming affordability

Notable Tensions

1. **State Mandates vs. Local Control:** State requiring parking minimum removal near transit; some want to go further
 2. **Affordability vs. Neighborhood Character:** Milestone property exemplifies this core conflict
 3. **Process Concerns:** Residents felt large-scale zoning changes bypass individual property rezoning protections
 4. **Definitions of "Affordable":** Not much discussion of income-restricted affordable housing; more focus on naturally affordable through age/smaller units
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What's NOT Being Discussed

- **Deed-restricted affordable housing programs**
- **Income-qualified housing requirements**
- **Specific affordable housing targets or goals**
- **Funding mechanisms for affordable housing**

This is about **zoning enabling conditions** for affordability (parking, unit types, density) rather than **affordable housing programs** per se.

Conclusion: The Planning Commission appears committed to zoning reforms that would facilitate more affordable housing through market mechanisms, but faces neighborhood resistance when those changes affect specific properties. The conversation is more technical (parking minimums, maximum sizes, form-based codes) than explicitly about "affordable housing crisis."