

# Vacant Lands Inventory and General Plan/Zoning Evaluations for Possible Re-designation to Promote Housing Opportunities

Project Update for  
Inyo County Planning Commission

February 24, 2021



# Project Need

Staff applied for and received a SB2 grant and with Helix Environmental has been working on a vacant lands inventory and zoning and General Plan review of properties located in the County.

This information will be used identify land that might be appropriate for zone and General Plan designation changes to promote affordable housing opportunities, primarily by increasing the allowable residential density. The reasons for the project are found in the County's current lack of family-wage housing opportunities.

- Several factors contribute to this issue, including:
  - A lack of available private property for development;
  - Difficulties in the provision of infrastructure and services;
  - Little interest from builders to provide “family-wage” and/or “affordable” housing choices;
  - State subdivision regulations that prohibit subdivision of areas outside Community Service District Boundaries (Fire) and very expensive requirements in the building code;
  - Outdated zoning.



# CEQA

## Notice of Preparation and Scoping

Project began in fall 2020 with a CEQA Notice of Preparation being submitted to the State Clearinghouse on November 4<sup>th</sup> . This was followed by a scoping meeting held on November 18<sup>th</sup> . The scoping meeting was held to:

- Provide information on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process;
- Identify the environmental issues the EIR will address;
- Solicit community input on the environmental issues that may be involved with the proposed project; and,
- Collect comments on the environmental analysis of the proposed project, especially for:
  - The range of alternatives to be considered to avoid or reduce impacts;
  - Potential environmental impacts of greatest concern to public agencies, organizations and individuals; and,
  - Avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures.



# CEQA

## Notice of Preparation and Scoping Cont.

The scoping meeting was not heavily attended, however, staff was still able to get very good comments. These included:

- There is an environmental constraints document that was produced by the City of Bishop around 2012 that might have relevant information to this proposed project;
- Better define which LADWP parcels to include;
- Support for mixed use commercial and residential zoning;
- Include LADWP lands, particularly lots on Main Street in Lone Pine, even if they are not on divestment lists because it may be possible to request divestment;



# Notice of Preparation and Scoping Cont.

Consider bringing in a large septic tank to support additional housing in areas such as Charleston View or Cartago even if these areas would otherwise fall outside the boundaries of the parcels under review because they are not within a sewer or water district;

- Include vacant or lightly developed County-owned lands for consideration; and,
- Several suggestions for increasing residential density, including easing restrictions for renting rooms in existing housing and changing existing zoning to allow for duplexes and second accessory dwelling units (ADU) in certain zones.



# GIS Analysis

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis was conducted with a set of parameters to find the best parcel candidates for designation changes that met the project's objectives and be inclusive of the scoping comments.

The GIS process used parcel data with overlays to determine the best fit for the project's purposes, starting with countywide parcel dataset, the following parameters were used to identify parcels:

1. Classified as vacant according to County assessor data.
2. Located within a local fire protection district.
3. Located within or adjacent to a water and/or sewer sanitary service district.
4. Designated as private property, County or LADWP ownership.



# GIS Analysis Cont.

5. Compiled a list of parcels that were identified with this process and added parcels that were identified as priorities in the current Housing Element.
6. Prepared a list of parcels zoned CBD and identified if they were vacant or non-vacant.
7. For each parcel included in the recommendation, an evaluation was conducted of the current minimum and maximum housing density and minimum and maximum number of dwelling units supported by the target parcels.

***Preliminary Results: Approximately 41 parcels (14 parcels outside of the CBD and 27 parcels within the CBD) .***



# CEQA

## Project Objectives

Project objectives drafted per Section 15124 of the CEQA Guidelines:

- Provide for increased housing opportunities in Inyo County primarily through increasing allowable residential density within existing and established communities, especially within the Central Business District land use designation.
- Allow for increased housing opportunities (primarily multi-family) in certain commercial zones ministerially (no additional discretionary action needed).
- Focus future housing opportunities to vacant land located adjacent to existing public transit stops and public utilities/services.
- Minimize direct and indirect impact from increased housing opportunities on the physical, biological, cultural, political, and socioeconomic environments.
- Identify zone changes to be consistent with General Plan land use designations to maximize density.





# CEQA

## Project Alternatives

Project alternatives drafted per Section 15126.6 of CEQA Guidelines.

- Proposed Project: Increased housing opportunities resulting in a net increase of approximately 219-475 Dwelling Units
- No Project Alternative: No change to General Plan land use designations or zoning ordinance.
- Reduced Housing Opportunity Alternative: Allowing only 146-356 dwelling units



# Other Ideas

## Encourage More ADU Development

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is the catch-all term for a secondary home on a residential lot. ADUs are an effective way to provide more affordable housing in infill communities without changing the existing character of residential neighborhoods. They are inherently less expensive homes that can meet the needs of low- to moderate-income families without the need for public subsidy.

Ways to encourage more ADUs for permanent housing:

- Allow for 2 ADUs per parcel – second one could require CUP.
- Do not allow additional ADUs to be used for short-term rentals.
- Remove all parking requirements for ADUs.
- Relax front-yard setback requirements for ADUs



# Other Ideas

Allow Mobile Homes Parks in the Multi-family 3-units and above zone without a CUP

Mobile/Manufactured Homes are consistently the most affordable housing type in Inyo County. Currently mobile home parks require a Conditional Use Permit.

Ways to create more mobile home opportunities:

- Change the R-3 zoning to allow for mobile home and/or RV parks outright.
- Change some open-space zoning to R-3, especially in the more rural areas.
- Find infrastructure opportunities to put large septic tanks in certain rural areas to help promote mobile home park development.



# Other Ideas

## Missing Middle Zoning

“Missing middle” describes multi-unit housing that fits within the scale of existing neighborhoods. While sometimes this term is used to refer to housing affordable to middle income households, this toolkit is referring to the missing middle housing type. This includes duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, townhomes, courtyard apartments, and bungalow courts. Missing middle is cheaper to produce than larger apartment buildings, tends to become naturally affordable rental housing as it ages, provides sufficient density to support the shops, restaurants, and transit that are associated with walkable neighborhoods, and usually fits in with the look and feel of a single-family neighborhood.

### Ways to create more missing middle zoning

- Change some zoning in single-family residential neighborhoods to multifamily 2 units and multi-family 3 and above units.



# Housing in Commercial Zones

There is a significant amount of underutilized land along transportation corridors and in established commercial districts. Jurisdictions can leave the existing commercial zoning in place, but also allow for residential projects within these zones. This allows for market flexibility if there is a commercial proposal and adds the potential for housing as well. Allowing for mixed use and residential projects provides an opportunity for new life to be brought into these corridors. Increasing the number of people that can walk and bike to these areas will help to revitalize them and promote the types of commercial uses that are still thriving.

How to provide more housing opportunities in commercial areas

- So far staff has reviewed allowing for multi-family housing in the Central Business zone without discretionary approval (currently requires a CUP). Other commercial districts could also be reviewed.



# Next Steps

Consultant will begin work on the EIR

Once it is completed changes to General Plan and Zoning Designations will be brought to the Planning Commission and Board for approval.



**Questions?**  
**Other Ideas?**