

# Arapahoe County Land Dedication Standards

*February 2, 2026*



# TischlerBise

FISCAL | ECONOMIC | PLANNING



CLIENT	Housing Mitigation	Transportation	Law Enforcement	Fire/EMS	Parks and Recreation	Trails/Open Space	Libraries	General Government
Adams County		◆			◆			
Arapahoe County		◆			◆			
Aspen	◆							
Berthoud Fire District				◆				
Boulder		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Castle Rock		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆
Colorado Springs		◆						
Crested Butte	◆							
Dacono		◆	◆		◆			◆
Durango	◆	◆						
Eaton			◆		◆	◆		◆
Erie		◆	◆		◆	◆		◆
Evans		◆						
Fort Collins		◆						
Fruita					◆	◆		
Garfield County		◆						
Grand Junction			◆	◆	◆			
Greeley		◆		◆	◆			
Lafayette			◆	◆	◆			◆
Lake Dillon Fire District				◆				
Larimer County		◆						
Lone Tree		◆	◆		◆	◆		◆
Longmont		◆		◆				◆
Louisville		◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Loveland			◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Mead		◆	◆		◆			◆
Montezuma County		◆						
Parker		◆	◆		◆			◆
Pitkin County		◆						
Pueblo		◆						
Thornton		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆
Vail		◆						

# Policy Items

- Policy items we'd like feedback:
  1. Dedication standards for park land
    - Study supports increasing the standard (acres per 1,000 residents), but important to consider the additional burden on housing development
  2. Land valuation methodology
    - Market Appraisal vs Assumed Value vs combined
  3. Land dedication for commercial development

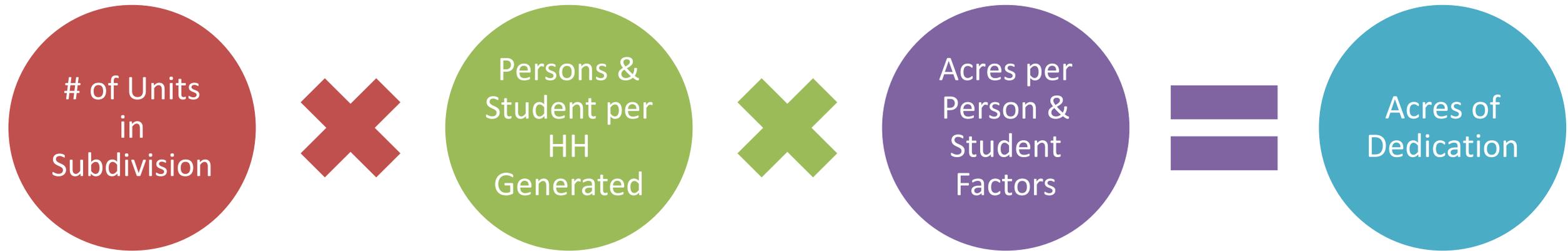
# Current Land Dedication Standards

- Purpose is to ensure land and funds for public sites and open space
  - Parks, schools, and other public facilities
- Methodology and land value amounts currently outdated (1990s)
- Applied to new subdivisions
  - 35+ acre lots are exempted
- Dedication for school land, park land, and other public facilities
  - Or cash-in-lieu
- Land/cash are collected and distributed based on school & park district boundaries
- Demographics and standards split between West & East

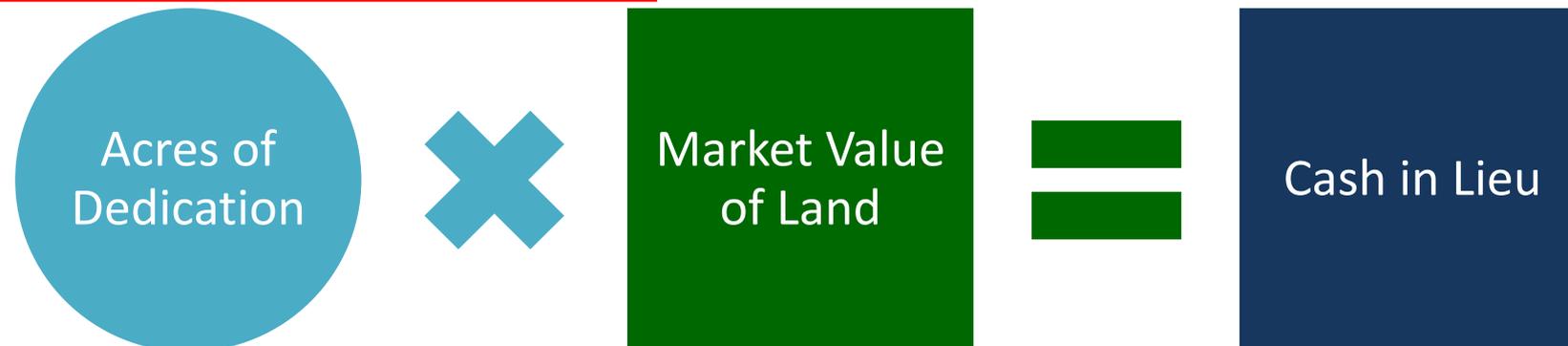
# Land Dedication Calculation

- Based on maximum number of dwelling units, acres per person, acres per student (i.e., demand factor)

## Calculation for Land Dedication (acres)



## Calculation for Cash in Lieu



# 2026 Study

- Update the demand factors
  - Local U.S. Census data and information from school districts
- Update park, school, and other levels of service
  - Including standards for future school sites
- Review land valuation options
- Input from stakeholders
  - 8 school districts, 5 rec districts, and the library district
    - Discussions were on capital needs, standards for future development, administrative changes to dedication policy
  - Two meetings with Home Builders Association (HBA)
    - Input on the growing costs to build housing, other park dedications subdivisions are making, land suitability, admin changes to policy
  - Met with County's Facility & Fleet, Public Works, and Open Space Departments

# Change in Demand Factors

- Recommending changing assessment based on housing type, not subdivision density
  - Similar, but more consistent with demand from the development
- Overall, decrease in number of people per unit (~**8 % decrease**)
- There have been increases in the number of students in smaller housing units
  - Common in areas where housing costs have increased

# Park Land Level of Service

- Current County & park districts level of service
  - 6 acres/1,000 residents -> 16 acres/1000 & 18 acres/1000 (**200% increase**)
- Increase is consistent with other communities
  - Most cities in region collect a park impact fees, Arapahoe County does not collect park impact fees
- Results justify increasing the dedication standard
  - Updated standard can be lower than max

Comparison of Park Land Dedication Requirements			
Jurisdiction*	Dedication Type	Level of Service Standard	Notes
Arapahoe County Current LOS	West Parks + Regional East Parks + Regional	18 acres per 1,000 Residents 16 acres per 1,000 Residents	
Douglas County	Local Parks + Regional	15 acres per 1,000 Residents	3% of commercial land dedicated for both park types
2025 National Average	Local Parks + Regional	10.2 acres per 1,000 Residents	
Adams County	Local Parks + Regional	10 acres per 1,000 Residents	5% of commercial land dedicated for regional parks only
Jefferson County	All Park Types	9.6 acres per 1,000 Residents	
Arapahoe County Existing Standards	All Park Types	6 acres per 1,000 Residents	

\*Note: Ordered by total acreage dedicated per 1,000 residents

# Acres per Household Summary

- Park and school standards have more than doubled in the West
- Increase in East from park standards increasing

Current Policy Acres per Household	SFD West	SFD East
Park Land	0.018	0.018
School Land	0.020	0.046
Other Facilities	0.001	0.001
<b>Total Acres per Single Family</b>	<b>0.039</b>	<b>0.065</b>

Updated Standards Acres per Household	SFD West	SFD East
Park Land	0.049	0.047
School Land	0.051	0.039
Other Facilities	0.001	0.001
<b>Total Acres per Single Family</b>	<b>0.101</b>	<b>0.088</b>
<b>Change in Acres</b>	<b>0.062</b>	<b>0.023</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>160%</b>	<b>35%</b>

The "ceiling" results in 0.1 acres being dedicated per single family detached home

# Land Valuation

- Cash-in-lieu translates acre dedication to cash payment based on fair market value of land. Current policy:
  1. Assumed value method
    - Static values from the 1990s:
      - \$40,000/acre in west, \$20,000/acre in east
  2. Appraisal method
    - Professional, MAI certified appraiser
    - Within 6 months of BoCC hearing
    - Includes sufficient public improvements/utilities for a school site
    - School or park district must request and pay for the appraisal
    - ❖ Vast majority of dedications have been under the appraisal approach

# Land Valuation

- County Assessor data for updated Assumed Value Method
  - West: \$130,000/acre (**200% increase**)
  - East: \$40,000/acre (**100% increase**)
    - Note: Since 1990, CPI is up 150%,
    - ENR Construction Cost Index is up 200%
    - Denver Home Price Index is up 550%
    - Household Income is up 150%
- Update to standards allows for change in options
  1. Status quo – assumed value & appraisal method – **staff recommendation**
  2. Solely assumed value
  3. Solely appraisal method

# Cash-In-Lieu Example

- Based on updated standards, below is an example of total acres and cash-in-lieu for 100-unit subdivision in West
- Consensus from Home Builders Association (HBA) that constructing the “missing middle”/ starter homes is becoming near impossible from a business perspective

Hypothetical Subdivision in West	
Single Family Detached	100 units
Land Value	\$200,000 per acre

Category	Updated Standards	Dedicated Acres		
Park Land	0.049	4.9		
School Land	0.051	5.1		
Other Facilities	0.001	0.1		
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>Current Policy</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Total Cash-in-Lieu</b>	<b>\$2,013,000</b>	<b>\$767,000</b>	<b>\$1,246,000</b>	
<b>Per Unit</b>	<b>\$20,130</b>	<b>\$7,670</b>	<b>\$12,460</b>	

# Commercial Assessment

- Adams and Douglas County assess park land dedication on commercial development
  - 5%, 3% of total subdivision
- Nexus: inflow of employment brings in additional users to parks and demand on other public facilities
- County **staff recommendation** is to add a 2% land dedication on commercial subdivisions for parks and other facilities

# Arapahoe County Land Dedication Policy

- Considerations:
  1. Increased standards – phasing over a few years or a grace period will help with “shock” to the market
  2. Dedications – developers are doing a lot of public park dedications and their own subdivision parks
  3. Land dedication program is cost prohibitive for most multifamily developments

# Next Steps

- Input from BoCC
- Prepare update and policy recommendations
- Prepare implementation and procedure recommendations
  - Beginning of summer

# Policy Items

- Policy items we'd like feedback:

1. Land valuation methodology

- Market Appraisal vs Assumed Value vs combined
  - Staff recommendation is continuing combined approach

2. Dedication standards for park land

- Study supports increasing the standard (acres per 1,000 residents), but important to consider the additional burden on housing development

3. Land dedication for commercial development

- Staff recommendation is 2% of subdivision for park and other public facilities

# Discussion

Colin McAweeney  
TischlerBiseGalena

Boise, ID | 208.515.7480 | [colin@tischlerbise.com](mailto:colin@tischlerbise.com)

# Appendix

# Assumed Value Indexed from 1990

- If the assumed land values were indexed to metrics the following would be the 2026 estimates per acres:
  - West (1990 - \$40,000; Updated - \$130,000)
    - CPI: \$101,000
    - ENR: \$121,000
    - Case-Shiller: \$262,000
  - East (1990 - \$20,000; Updated - \$40,000)
    - CPI: \$51,000
    - ENR: \$60,000
    - Case-Shiller: \$131,000

# Affordable Housing

- On 9/9/2025, the commissioners adopted incentives for affordable housing that reduces the amount of land or cash in lieu when a minimum of 50% of total units are affordable for at least 20 years

# Change in Demand Factors

- Recommending changing assessment based on housing type, not subdivision density
  - Similar, but more consistent with demand from the development
- Overall, decrease in number of people per unit
  - Used in the park land and other facility land calculations

Persons per Housing Unit						
Residential Density	Existing Standards [1]	Housing Unit Type	West [2]	Percent Change	East [3]	Percent Change
0.00 - 7.49 du/ac	2.96	Single Family Detached	2.71	-8%	2.96	0%
7.50 - 14.99 du/ac	2.39	Single Family Attached	2.03	-15%	2.13	-11%
15.00 du/ac and above	1.76	Multifamily	1.74	-1%	1.83	4%

[1] Source: Current Arapahoe County Land Development Code, Population and Student Generation Calculations

[2] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 5-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample for Colorado PUMA 1301, 1501, 1601, 1602 and 1603

[3] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 5-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample for Colorado PUMA 1401

# Change in Demand Factors

- Decrease in students per housing unit for most types
- But increase in students for multifamily development is common in areas where housing costs have increased
- Used in the school land calculation

Students per Housing Unit						
Residential Density	Existing Standards [1]	Housing Unit Type	West [2]	Percent Change	East [3]	Percent Change
0.00 - 7.49 du/ac	0.775	Single Family Detached	0.678	-13%	0.600	-23%
7.50 - 14.99 du/ac	0.364	Single Family Attached	0.385	6%	0.280	-23%
15.00 du/ac and above	0.195	Multifamily	0.288	47%	0.140	-28%

[1] Source: Current Arapahoe County Land Development Code, Population and Student Generation

[2] Source: Cherry Creek and Aurora School District analysis of housing units and students in E-470 corridor

[3] Source: Bennett School District Student Generation Rates, 2022, Provided by Western Demographics

# Park Land Level of Service

- Park land is broken down into countywide regional parks and service area parks
- Current acres are compared to current population to find level of service

### Countywide Regional Parks

Jurisdiction	Park Land (Acres)
Arapahoe County Open Spaces	5,127
Byers Parks and Rec	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,206</b>

<i>Level-of-Service Standards</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Total Acres	5,206
2025 Population [1]	655,720
<b>Acres per 1,000 Persons</b>	<b>7.94</b>

Source: Arapahoe County Open Spaces; Byers Parks and Recreation

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, DRCOG Small Area Forecast

### West Service Area Parks

Jurisdiction	Park Land (Acres)
Trails Parks and Rec	249
Cherry Creek Vista Parks and Rec	26
Arapahoe County Open Spaces	140
South Suburban Parks and Rec	1,922
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,336</b>

<i>Level-of-Service Standards</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Total Acres	2,336
2025 Population [1]	232,305
<b>Acres per 1,000 Persons</b>	<b>10.06</b>

Source: Trails Parks and Recreation; Cherry Creek Vista Parks and Recreation; Arapahoe County Open Spaces; South Suburban Parks and Recreation

[1] DRCOG Small Area Forecast

### East Service Area Parks

Jurisdiction	Park Land (Acres)
Strasburg Parks and Rec	55
Byers Parks and Rec	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

<i>Level-of-Service Standards</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Total Acres	57
2025 Rural Population [1]	6,873
<b>Acres per 1,000 Persons</b>	<b>8.27</b>

Source: Strasburg Parks & Recreation; Byers Parks and Recreation

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, DRCOG Small Area Forecast

# Other Public Facility Land

- Current standard is 0.25 acres per 1,000 residents
  - Includes libraries, fire stations, County facilities (sheriff, clerks)

Jurisdiction	Land (Acres)
Arapahoe County Facilities	204
Arapahoe Libraries	37
Fire Districts	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>

<i>Level-of-Service Standards</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Share of Acres	299
2025 Population [1]	655,720
<b>Acres per 1,000 Persons</b>	<b>0.46</b>

Source: Arapahoe County Facilities and Fleet Management Department, Arapahoe County Assessor Data

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, DRCOG Small Area Forecast

# School Land

- Current standard is 0.0766 acres per student

West Service Area			
School Type	Minimum Site (acres)	Standard Enrollment	Acres per Student
Elementary	11.3	644	0.0175
Middle	25.0	1,000	0.0250
High	58.0	1,800	0.0322
<b>Total Acres per Student</b>			<b>0.0747</b>

Source: Aurora School District Site Acquisition Standards

East Service Area			
School Type	Total Acres*	Total Capacity*	Acres per Student
Elementary	17.6	1,107	0.0159
Middle	16.4	525	0.0313
High	22.3	661	0.0337
<b>Total Acres per Student</b>			<b>0.0809</b>

\*Total acres and capacity is from Bennett and Byers School Districts

# Land Suitability

- Land for school and park sites need to be suitable:
  - Below 2% slope
  - Not in floodplain nor stormwater detention
  - No environmental mitigation needed
    - Old dumpsites have been dedicated in the past, resulting in costs to school and park districts
  - Utility-ready
    - Water, sewer, electricity, stormwater, fiber, etc.
  - Appropriate location for school related traffic
  - Park land needs to be suitable for active park uses
    - Not a narrow strip of land
  - HBA noted that floodplain still has a use and narrow dedications can be trails

# Policy Update Cadence

- Recommendation is to update policy at least every 5 years
  - Updates will capture changes in the market, costs, CIPs, demographics, etc.
  - County staff is exploring updating every 2 years