

How Development Works in Golden

One of the more longstanding land use policies of the City of Golden is our residential growth management system enacted in 1996, and sometimes referred to as our 1% growth ordinance. This system to balance residential construction with community goals and a desire to manage our community growth was proposed by a citizen group, and has been diligently supported by City Council, Planning Commission, and staff ever since.

Over the almost 20 years since its adoption, our growth management system has only been refined a few times, and the total increase in residential dwellings has been significantly less than the maximum allowable under the code. But, since most residential construction occurs in concentrated projects, it may appear at times that there is either a lot of construction or very little. When construction is more visible, City Council is sometimes questioned whether the 1% growth system is being enforced. Here's how it works.

1% Growth Facts

718 = The number of residential allocations available for new dwellings in 10 years from 2005 thru 2014.

541 = The number of residential dwellings added to Golden in 10 years from 2005 thru 2014.

0.71% = The average annual growth in residential dwellings in Golden from 2000 thru 2014.

55 = Number of banked allocations for general housing projects at end of 2014.

46 = Number of banked allocations for a proposed north Golden senior and assisted living project at end of 2014.

- Every January, City Council determines how many “allocations” will be available for additional dwellings by taking the total number of residential dwellings at the start of the prior year and adding the amount of new residences that received building permits in the prior year. Since the construction of a home or apartment building takes many months, units are often counted before they are completed. The number of new allocations for the year is now only 0.9% of the total, which comes out to 75 for 2015.
- Allocations are distributed to individual builders and projects in three cycles per year, and can be used at once or, with City approval, placed in a “bank account” to be saved up until the project has sufficient allocations to begin construction. So the number of allocations used in a given year can be either greater or less than what was distributed in that year. A complete summary table of the use of allocations for the fifteen year period from 2000 through 2014 is available as [Resolution 2391](#).

In 2013, after several months of community discussion, City Council made three changes to the system. These changes served to further restrict residential growth in general, while accommodating a sustainable project near the transit line. The changes approved by Council included:

- Elimination of the potential to seek an exception from the system for certain senior housing projects.
- An overall reduction in the maximum allowable growth rate from 1% to 0.9% (in terms of new annual allocations).
- Giving the City Council the authority to borrow allocations from up to four years in the future in limited cases for a project near the light rail station.

The last change to allow the construction of a project near the light rail station was supported by the original 1% group as being more sustainable and less of an impact than other types of residential projects. As of mid 2015, the project has received 96 of its required 172 allocations, and will receive the balance by 2018. As a result, the available allocations for other projects are reduced for this time period.

Since Golden is not expanding and has not had a new single family subdivision in several years, residential construction will be what is called infill or redevelopment, and will often be very visible. If you ever have questions about this process, contact the City Planning Division at planningcommission@cityofgolden.net.