

Clucking in Castle Pines backyards?



By Mike McKibbin / NewsBreak Denver / May 11, 2023

[CASTLE PINES, COLO.] — Backyard chickens may be allowed in Castle Pines.

The city council [Tuesday night](#) directed city staff begin a community engagement process to see whether residents want to allow the growing practice as a form of "urban agriculture" and in reaction to increasing food prices.

The move follows a council meeting earlier this year where a handful of residents urged the city to allow residents to raise small flocks of chickens.

Chickens already allowed, but lots too small

Community Development Director Sam Bishop explained the city [zoning ordinance](#) allows chickens, but the city zone districts do not accommodate the birds.

He noted five of the city's six planned developments are silent on chickens, and there are no estate residential or agricultural lots the ordinance identifies as allowed to have chickens. Only the Canyons planned development east of Interstate 25 allows chickens, but it needs larger lots to meet the ordinance requirements.

"So effectively, we don't allow chickens," Bishop added.

He also said the ordinance's definition of household pets exempts animals raised to supplement food supplies or for commercial purposes. That would apply to chickens, Bishop stated.

Not a lot of violations or questions

The issue of people illegally raising chickens has resulted in just two violations since Castle Pines was incorporated in 2007. Bishop recalled 10-15 general inquiries about the practice since 2008. He noted the city's 30 or so homeowners' associations might have received more complaints and violations.

The city previously amended the zoning ordinance to allow beekeeping, and Bishop said making chickens legal in five of the six planned developments might have little impact.

"It could be preempted by planned development regulations or more restrictive private covenants, conditions and restrictions," he explained.

Bishop noted Lone Tree has a similar situation as Castle Pines, while Douglas County, Castle Rock, Parker, Highlands Ranch, and around 15 cities along the Front Range allow backyard chickens under certain conditions.

Among areas of concern: odors, noise, diseases and attracting predators, which could be mitigated by regulations, Bishop added.

Open houses and hearings

The amendment process will include an extensive public input process with an open house, followed by draft regulations, more public input, then hearings before the city planning commission and city council.

"I don't think we'll be reinventing the wheel or have something no one's ever seen before," Bishop said. "We know a percentage of people just don't want to allow chickens, and I'd anticipate this would be a highly charged subject."

While not discouraging the process, Councilmember Roger Hudson said if he had a neighbor with two barking dogs who raised chickens, "I might lose my mind."

"I don't see how chickens would interact with dogs and wildlife in our area," he added. "We've had bobcats, bears, and we had three deer in our yard this week. When you kill a chicken, there are smells, and I don't want to mess with that. I get it that people think it's cute, but I just don't want to live next to that noise, that smell, and there's chicken poop."

Councilmember Deborah Mulvey said she had received a few emails from residents of her district to allow chickens.

"I haven't heard any negative comments," she added. "I'm in favor of continuing the process."

The council's agenda packet included two email comments opposing any ordinance changes.