

Suggested Title:

Development and the Future of Berthoud

To the editor and the citizens of Berthoud,

My name is Sean Murphy, and I am a licensed architect and have proudly called Berthoud home since 2013. I joined the Berthoud Planning Commission in 2018 to help curb the worst excesses of rapid, unplanned development in northern Colorado and to form policy and code that would protect the special character and history of this small town we all love. I was elected to serve as a Berthoud Trustee in 2022 and was honored to be selected by my peers to serve as the Mayor Pro-Tem in 2024. With development being a perennial and often contentious topic, the Berthoud Weekly Surveyor was kind enough to invite me to share my perspective.

After seven years of public service, through countless late-night meetings and policy sessions, I am very optimistic about Berthoud's future. I believe Berthoud's code and plans reflect a pragmatic middle ground that avoids the regulatory, prescriptive excesses of towns like Boulder, while stopping uncontrolled development that occurs in towns like Severance. The board and I continue to prioritize efforts to upgrade sidewalks, rebuild streets, renovate parks, build water infrastructure, and purchase hundreds of acres for conservation, recreation, and agriculture. As the town upgrades infrastructure, improves amenities, and provides more services for our existing residents, it becomes more and more desirable for others to come here. Growth is inevitable for the entire Front Range of Colorado. The question is how we shape it.

I want future development in Berthoud to look and feel like the brick and stone storefronts of Mountain Avenue, the stripped-down Victorian homes on 6th Street, or dozens of other places with good architecture, landscaping, and infrastructure. I believe Berthoud's current code, plans, and efforts seek to achieve this. While our town plays a role in shaping the development "rulebook", private property owners are entitled to use their property. Berthoud's code and plans strongly recommend or demand planning, design, and construction that is respectful of historical and neighborhood context. Comments from Town staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Trustees regularly reflect this desire as well. Yet, if owners and developers meet the rules set forth at federal, state, county, and local levels, denial of legal uses is often an arbitrary and capricious "taking" of private property rights. Town board members have significant limits on their powers to act on or even discuss specific private property issues outside of an announced, public hearing. I also believe it is unfair and unjust for our local government to operate in a targeted manner towards any individual property owner.

I believe deliberate, proactive planning for development can stop many issues before they happen, but it requires steadfast community engagement and a deep understanding of the town's process and powers. I would encourage residents to attend meetings, to read Berthoud's Development Code and documents, join a committee, and to ask pointed questions of Town staff and the Board of Trustees. Berthoud's guiding documents, such as the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Plan, the Future Land Use Plan,

architecture and landscape guidelines, the Mountain Avenue and 1st Street Corridor Plans, provide stability and steer the town's long-term vision beyond this board's time in office. However, they should not be seen as stagnant but rather living documents to be shaped by the citizens of Berthoud. Your Board of Trustees, Planning Commission, and Town staff are working hard and deliberating on these issues regularly, whether it be height limitations, open space requirements, preferred neighborhood recreation amenities, or construction code. Good governance and good development require your regular participation.

Development, design, and planning are large and nuanced topics with a steep learning curve. Even with my expertise, I admit I don't have all the answers, but we need your engagement, awareness, and your specific, constructive criticism. To say that Berthoud is "too big" or that a specific development is "bad", is not an argument that holds water. Bring the data. Ask questions. Show me the development code line that needs an update. I look forward to having an open, respectful discussion.

As always, I am humbled and honored to serve on your behalf in these efforts. I am proud to raise my family in Berthoud, CO. I am proud of our town and its rich history. I am proud of the development plans, code, and policy created to protect our small town character. Will you help protect and shape its future?

Respectfully,

Sean Murphy
Mayor Pro-Tem