



# Backyard Chickens

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City Council Study Session May 9, 2016



# Presentation Outline

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1. Introduction and Background
2. General Information
3. City Comparison and Analysis
4. Summary/City Council Direction/Next Steps





# Introduction and Background

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# Purpose

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- To discuss the issues surrounding backyard chickens and seek direction from City Council to allow or continue to prohibit backyard chickens within Commerce City.



# Background

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- City Council direction to staff to research issues concerning backyard chickens.
- Prior to Aug. 2010, Commerce City municipal code prohibited roosters but silent on chickens. Municipal code re-write prohibited all animals not defined as “household pets” or “pet animals” in any zone district that is not Agricultural.
- Currently, zoning code only allows chickens on Agricultural properties.
- Tonight’s discussion is only about chickens, not any other type of urban farm animal.





# General Information

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# General Info- Urban Agriculture

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- As citizens re-populate older urban areas, increased interest in urban agriculture issues.
- Desire to be more environmentally conscious, humane and to eat healthier.
- Backyard chickens are on an upward trend nationally- hundreds of cities around the US allow them.





# General Info- Baby Chicks

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- Cost =\$1-\$5 each. Young hens that have just started laying eggs cost \$15-\$25 each.
- Where to get?
  - Mail order
  - Local feed & hay stores
  - National western stock show
- For the general public, determining sex is very difficult until the chicken is four to six weeks old. Then differences in feathers become apparent.

# General Info- Egg Laying

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- 20 weeks is typical age for the first egg.
- Frequency of laying- 1 egg/day, some 1 egg/every other day, some once or twice a week.
- Some breeds can produce over 300 eggs per year.
- Most hens usually produce usable eggs for two years before declining in production, but some continue to lay eggs longer.
- Hens will lay eggs whether or not they are situated with a rooster
- Unconfined hens may lay eggs anywhere outdoors if they don't want to return to the coop.



# General Info- Feed and Meat

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- Chicken Feed
  - 50 lb. bag costs approximately \$30.00
  - Typical Ingredients: corn, oats, wheat, barley, sorghum, and milling by-products. soybean meal and other oilseed meals (peanut, sesame, safflower, sunflower, etc.), cottonseed meal, animal protein sources (meat and bone meal, dried whey, fish meal, etc.), and grain legumes (beans, field peas, and alfalfa).
  - Chickens will also eat vegetables and gardens, bread, bugs, and household food scraps.
  - Chickens will eat eggs, even their own. An egg that gets accidentally broken will likely be eaten by the chickens.
- Chicken Meat
  - Backyard chickens are not typically raised for their meat.
  - Older chickens can be used for stew or soup.



# General Info- Predators and Stress

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- Predators & Pests
  - Predator proofing of coops is very important.
  - Predators can range from foxes, raccoons and coyotes, to your household pet dog.
  - Chicken food can attract other animals such as squirrels and skunks.
- Chicken stress & fighting
  - Roosters will attack other roosters that enter their territory.
  - Over crowding of hens in coops and excess heat can lead to feather picking, egg eating, and lack of egg laying.

# General Info- Noise and Dust

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- Noise
  - Chickens usually are very quiet and are not normally heard 25 feet away.
  - During egg laying, hen noise may rise up to around 63 decibels (noise of two people talking).
- Dust Bathing
  - Utilized for cleaning and removing mites and fleas
  - Frequency is several times a day



# General Info- Coops

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- Coop Types
  - Basic to Fancy coops
  - Chicken Tractors (moveable)
- Price:
  - 2 – 4 chickens (\$200 to \$1,500)
  - 5 – 8 chickens (\$400 to \$1,800)
- Often, coops need electricity for light bulbs and timers, water de-icers & heaters.





# General Info- Coops

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- Basic

- Fancy



- Tractor

# General Info-Coops

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- The more space, the happier and healthier the chickens will be; overcrowding contributes to disease and feather picking.
- Coop ventilation is more important than insulation.
- Coops should be cleaned on a regular basis to mitigate odor, disease and mites.
- Fenced run yard also needed- Approximately 10 sf/ hen





# City Comparison and Analysis

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# Comparative City Review

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The following 15 cities were part of the comparative review:

- Arvada, Aurora, Brighton, Castle Rock, Colorado Springs, Commerce City, Englewood, Greeley, Greenwood Village, Lakewood, Longmont, Loveland, Parker, Thornton, and Westminster.



# Comparative City Review

City Name	Chickens Allowed	Maximum Number	Permit/Review Required
Arvada	Y	5	N
Aurora	Y	4	Y
Brighton	Y	6	N
Castle Rock	Y	6	N
Colorado Springs	Y	10	N
Denver	Y	8	N
Englewood	Y	N/A	N
Greeley	Y	10 per Acre	N
Greenwood Village	Y	N/A	N
Lakewood	Y	4	Y
Longmont	Y	4	Y
Loveland	Y	Not Stated	N
Parker	N	N/A	N/A
Thornton	N	N/A	N/A
Westminster	Y	6	Y

# Comparative City Review

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Most municipalities address backyard chickens in the animal section of the municipal code.

- Cannot appeal # of chickens through municipal code to get more.
- Coops are dealt with through development code as accessory buildings.
- Nuisance Regulations are used to control # (odor, etc.), roosters, and fighting.
  - Noise ordinances limit ability to keep Roosters.
  - Cruelty of Animals used to restrict fighting.



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# Comparative City Review

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- Since Fall 2015, staff doubled checked with cities on new nuisances to see results of overall program:
  - Limited number of complaints in general, less than expected
    - Aurora had 67 complaints in 2014, Almost 0 in 2015
  - The typical complaint is regarding roosters
  - Cities actually receive more complaints on dog related issues.
  - Longmont has issues 318 permits since 2009
  - Lakewood issued 60 permits in 2015



# Additional Analysis

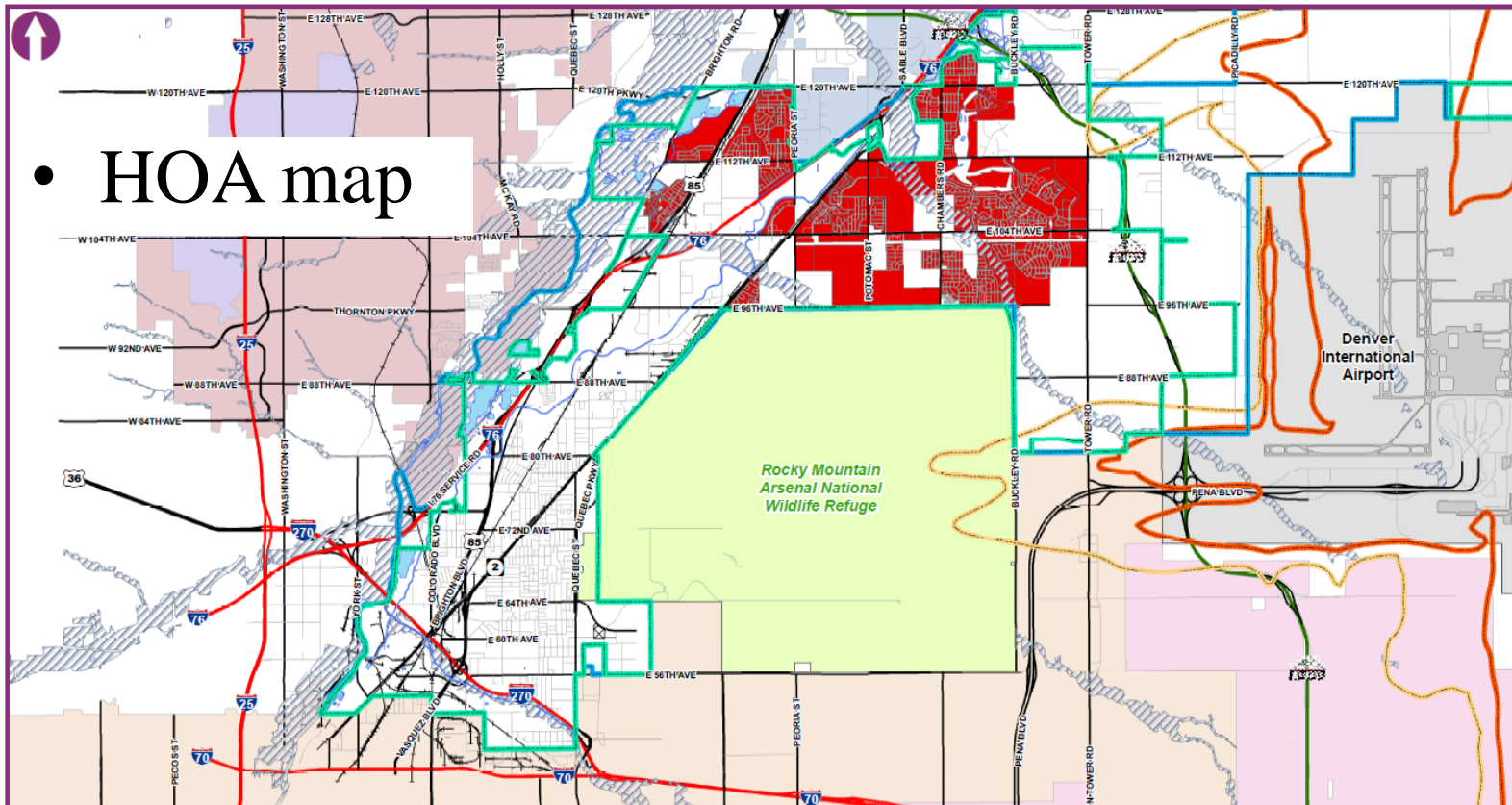
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- HOA regulations are given authority on regulation of backyard chickens.
- Local HOAs were surveyed:
  1. Representing 15 of the 23 Northern Range HOA's
  2. None of the HOA's and their By-Laws allow or support the keeping of backyard chickens.
  3. 67% of homeowners would need to vote in favor of changing HOA By-Laws



# Additional Analysis

- HOA map



Legend



Backyard Chickens Prohibited

0 2,350 700 9,400 14,100 18,800 Feet

Backyard Chickens

January 2016

Path: G:\Projects\Backyard Chickens\Prohibited map.mxd Author: CO\_AKMACHER



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# Additional Analysis

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- Commerce City Police Calls for Service – Chicken related issues:
  - In 2014, there were 17
  - In 2015, there were 10
- Most calls were from Historic City, although a couple from Northern Range. None were from Agricultural areas.





# Summary/Direction from Council and Next Steps

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# Pros and Cons

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## Pros:

- Backyard chicken eggs are a healthy homegrown food source
- Seen as symbol of sustainability
- May provide additional revenue through selling of eggs
- Friendship/community provided via having pets
- Education and teaching tool for children
- Provides compost for gardens



# Pros and Cons

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## Cons:

- Coop construction and maintenance (permits, electricity, etc.)
- Animal waste, dust & odors related to dirty coops
- Chicken & coops can attract flies, rodents, predators and other animals
- Lifespan; hens out-live their productive egg laying years and can live for another 6-8 years
- Noise related to egg laying
- Potential for human illness/ illness transferred from animal to animal



# Direction from Council

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- Options from City Council:
  1. Keep current regulations = Keep prohibition
  2. Acquire more information if needed
  3. Move forward with drafting regulations for backyard chickens

NOTE: If direction is given to move forward with regulations, an additional study session with council would occur to discuss draft regulations.



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# Questions and Discussion

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