



## RIVER VALLEY RANCH

### VACANT LOT IMPROVEMENT VARIANCE POLICY

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to establish criteria and procedures for considering variance requests for landscape improvements on vacant lots within the community.

This Policy supports community goals related to wildfire mitigation, environmental stewardship, waterwise landscaping, preservation of the natural mountain valley setting, and protection of community character and property values, while remaining consistent with the Master Declaration of Protective Covenants (“Declaration”) and Design Guidelines.

In accordance with Page 1 of the Design Guidelines, proposed improvements must preserve the natural beauty of the mountain valley setting, ensure harmonious residential and landscape design, and protect and enhance property values.

Additionally, pursuant to Paragraph 6.12 of the Design Guidelines, proposed landscape improvements must respond to and integrate with the landscaping, grading, and plant materials of adjacent residential homesites, community spaces, and streetscape.

All proposed improvements remain subject to variance review and approval as provided herein and in the Declaration.

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#### **Authority**

This Policy is adopted pursuant to the variance authority granted under the Declaration, including:

- Paragraph 3.41, authorizing the Executive Board to grant variances from restrictions contained in Article 3 under extenuating circumstances; and
- Paragraph 4.19, authorizing the Development Review Committee (“DRC”) to grant variances pertaining to proposed improvements when:
  1. unique circumstances exist,
  2. or when changed circumstances have rendered certain restrictions obsolete, and

3. the proposed activity will not materially adversely affect the community.

This Policy does not amend the Declaration and does not create any permanent right to improve vacant lots.

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### **Eligibility Criteria**

A vacant lot owner seeking approval for improvements shall submit a variance request package to the DRC demonstrating that:

1. A change in circumstances since the recording of the Declaration justifies consideration of the variance, including wildfire risk mitigation, or water conservation objectives;
  2. The proposed improvements improve wildfire safety compared to the current condition of the lot;
  3. The proposed improvements incorporate waterwise landscaping principles and minimize unnecessary irrigation demand; and
  4. The proposed improvements will not materially adversely affect neighboring properties or the community.
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### **Firewise and Waterwise Standards**

All proposed improvements must incorporate both Firewise and Waterwise principles.

#### **Firewise Requirements**

Proposals shall:

- Reduce wildfire risk to adjacent homes and property;
- Comply with applicable local and state fire resiliency requirements and recognized best practices; and
- Avoid creating greater wildfire hazards than currently exist on the lot.

#### **Waterwise Requirements**

Proposals shall:

- Utilize water-conserving landscape practices;

- Minimize high-water-demand plantings;
  - Use efficient irrigation methods where irrigation is proposed; and
  - Strongly encourage native or adaptive low-water-use and low-flammability plant species.
  - Native species are encouraged but not required, provided the overall design remains reasonably Firewise and Waterwise.
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### **Permitted Improvements**

The following limited improvements may be considered for approval through the variance process:

- Minor grading for drainage or wildfire mitigation;
  - Native seeding;
  - Trees, shrubs, and plantings consistent with Firewise and Waterwise principles;
  - Efficient irrigation systems;
  - Removal of hazardous vegetation; and
  - Other limited landscape improvements approved by the DRC and Board.
  - **Any approved irrigation system shall be subject to all applicable irrigation fees and charges.**
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### **Prohibited Improvements**

The following improvements are prohibited:

- Residential or accessory structures;
- Extensive grading or earthwork;
- Pavement or extensive hardscape;
- Retaining walls;
- Fencing or screening walls;
- Structured play equipment;

- Outdoor storage;
  - Parking areas or driveways; and
  - Other improvements determined by the DRC or Board to exceed the limited scope intended by this Policy.
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### **Application Requirements**

Applicants shall submit:

1. A site and landscape plan identifying proposed improvements;
  2. Plant and irrigation information sufficient for review;
  3. A written explanation describing how the proposal satisfies Firewise and Waterwise objectives; and
  4. Any additional information requested by the DRC.
  5. For substantial landscape proposals, the DRC will require preparation by a licensed Colorado landscape architect.
  6. Applicants shall participate in a pre-design meeting with the DRC prior to formal submission. The pre-design meeting will be free of charge; however, the standard DRC hourly rate will apply beginning with the first official review meeting.
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### **Review**

1. The DRC shall review the application for compliance with this Policy.
2. The DRC may recommend approval, denial, or conditions of approval.
3. Any recommendation for approval shall be forwarded to the Executive Board for final determination.
4. The Executive Board retains sole discretion regarding approval or denial of any variance request.

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**Maintenance Requirements**

All approved improvements shall be continuously maintained in substantial conformance with the approved variance application and landscape plan.

Property owners are responsible for maintaining landscaping, irrigation systems, drainage features, and wildfire mitigation measures in a safe, functional, and aesthetically acceptable condition consistent with community standards.

Failure to properly maintain approved improvements may constitute a violation of the governing documents and may result in enforcement action by the Association.

**ADOPTED this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026, by the Executive Board of Directors of the River Valley Ranch Master Association.**

**PRESIDENT’S CERTIFICATION**

The undersigned, being the President of the River Valley Ranch Master Association, certifies that the foregoing policy was adopted by the Board of Directors of the Association at a duly called and noticed meeting of the Board of Directors.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
President

Date: \_\_\_\_\_