
VACANT LOTS

Can it be built on?

So, you have a vacant parcel and you want to build a house...

In 1987 and 1988, vacant residential parcels in the Tahoe Basin were evaluated for land capability and scored based on the following eight elements:

- Relative erosion hazard
- Runoff potential
- Access
- Stream environment zones
- Condition of local watershed
- Ability to revegetate
- Need for water quality improvements in the vicinity of the parcel
- Distance from Lake Tahoe

Each parcel was given an Individual Parcel Evaluation System (IPES) score ranging from 0 to 1017, based on the above eight elements. At the same time, a minimum score was established in each jurisdiction that determined if a lot was considered “buildable” or not. Originally, only parcels with an IPES score of 726 (the IPES line) or higher were considered “buildable.” The IPES Line was designed to lower over time as more environmental restoration projects were completed in each jurisdiction. In most counties, the IPES Line has dropped to a score at which every vacant parcel that is not located in a Stream Environment Zone can now apply for a building allocation or permit. In Placer County, the IPES line is 726 and some parcels may not have a buildable IPES score at this time.

Douglas County	1 or above
El Dorado County	1 or above
Placer County	726 or above
Washoe County	1 or above

For vacant parcels in Placer County, TRPA has developed a Limited IPES Incentive Program that may allow you to improve your IPES score by contributing to water quality improvement projects in your area. The IPES Limited Incentive Program Application is a good source of information and is available at our offices or on our website, www.trpa.org.

Your IPES score will also indicate the percentage of allowable coverage for your site. It’s important to remember that in areas where the IPES Line is now 1, a vacant lot may not have enough allowable coverage to make building feasible. In some cases you may be able to purchase additional coverage. Review [TRPA Code of Ordinances Subsection 20.3.B](#) (PDF download) for additional information about transferring coverage from one parcel to another.

How much of the parcel can be developed?

The base allowable coverage (coverage assigned to the property) or the maximum allowable coverage (maximum coverage a property may have pursuant to land coverage transfers), whichever is greater, will tell you the percentage of coverage (development area) that may occupy the parcel. However, coverage may NOT be located within stream environment zones or stream environment zone setbacks. Additionally, if the parcel is greater than one third of an acre (14,520 square feet), you will want to have TRPA conduct a Determination of Allowable Coverage to determine the maximum allowable coverage possible for the parcel.

Can I transfer in more coverage?

TRPA has assigned parcels with IPES scores a set amount of base allowable coverage. On some parcels, the maximum amount of coverage equals the base allowable coverage. In this case, you may not transfer in more coverage. On other parcels, subtract the base allowable coverage from the maximum allowable coverage to determine how much coverage may be transferred to the parcel. The maximum allowable coverage is shown on the following table. Transferred coverage must come from a parcel within the same Hydrologic Transfer Area and from an equal or more sensitive parcel. Coverage may not be transferred until a project which needs coverage has been approved.

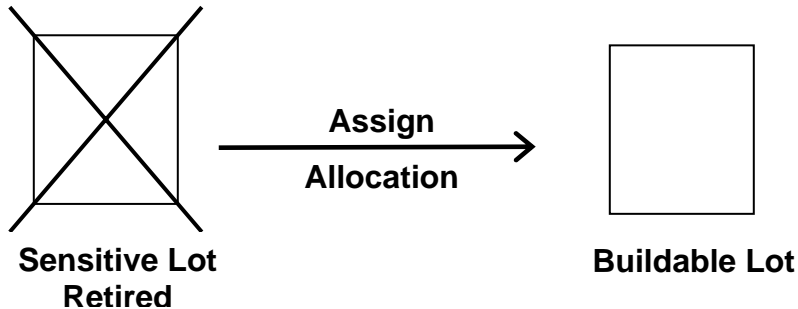
Maximum Parcel Coverages:

Project Area (Sq. Ft.)	Maximum Land Coverage
0 - 4,000	Base Land Coverage Only
4,001 - 9,000	1,800 sq. ft.
9,001 - 14,000	20% of Project Area
14,000 - 16,000	2,900 sq. ft.
16,000 - 20,000	3,000 sq. ft.
20,001 - 25,000	3,100 sq. ft.
25,001 - 30,000	3,200 sq. ft.
30,001 - 40,000	3,300 sq. ft.
40,001 - 50,000	3,400 sq. ft.
50,001 - 70,000	3,500 sq. ft.
70,001 - 90,000	3,600 sq. ft.
90,001 - 120,000	3,700 sq. ft.
120,001 - 150,000	3,800 sq. ft.
200,001 - 400,000	4,000 sq. ft.
150,001 - 200,000	3,900 sq. ft.
200,001 - 400,000	4,000 sq. ft.

How do I get an Allocation?

A. Contact your local jurisdiction (Placer County, El Dorado County, Washoe County, Douglas County, or the City of South Lake Tahoe) for specific information. You will generally pay a fee and be put on a waiting list.

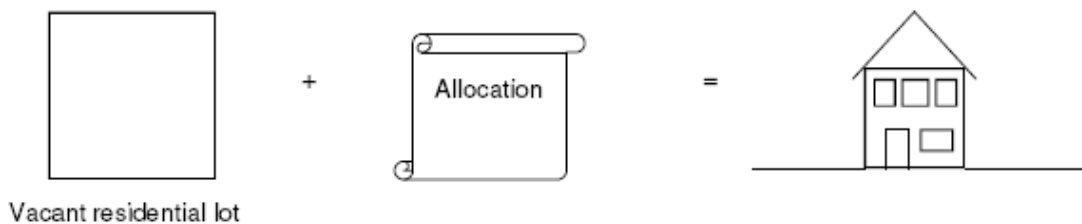
B. Deed restrict a sensitive lot so it may never be developed, and in turn TRPA will assign an allocation to the parcel to be developed (see Allocation Assignment Application).



C. Transfer a Residential Unit of Use* to the parcel to be developed. Generally, you will want to have the Development Right on this vacant parcel verified and banked prior to developing it. That can be done through the TRPA Banking Application. In the future, the Development Right may be transferred off the parcel to be developed.

* This process does not involve an allocation, see the following section.

$$\text{DEVELOPMENT RIGHT (ability to develop a lot)} + \text{ALLOCATION (permission to build)} = \text{RESIDENTIAL UNIT OF USE (final construction)}$$



The three items listed above are a form of development right. Any one of them may be transferred separately to and from parcels according to TRPA guidelines. In this equation, to construct a single family dwelling on a vacant parcel, it must acquire a Development Right (which most vacant parcels in single family dwelling areas already have), and must acquire a residential allocation. Allocations can be acquired from the local jurisdiction, from TRPA for sensitive lot retirement, or by transfer from another parcel. Once a single family dwelling is built on the parcel, it no longer has a development right or an allocation. The residence is now considered a Residential Unit of Use.

Note: This handout is intended to provide basic information about the development of vacant residential lots. All project applications will be reviewed in accordance with the latest adopted regulations of the TRPA Regional Plan which may not be reflected in this handout.