

# Settlers Drive Is the Wrong Place for the SLASH Yard

Oct 25, 2026 · Homestead residents

We support Jefferson County's SLASH program. We ask the county not to build its permanent slash yard on Settlers Drive, and to choose one of the better options ranked below.

## Why Settlers Drive is the wrong place

### 1. It puts 157 homes worth \$152.6 million next to a new industrial wood yard

The point of SLASH is to move wood fuel away from homes. This site stockpiles it inside a neighborhood: 157 homes, assessed at \$152.6 million, sit within half a mile of the work pad ([county parcel data](#)). Market and replacement values run higher.

- **The county's own wildfire plan says a fire here would hurt more homes than almost anywhere else.** Its 2024 Community Wildfire Protection Plan rates 98 planning areas. The one around Settlers Drive ranks in the 95th percentile for wildfire exposure to homes, higher than every alternative below. Tincup Ridge, where the material ends up anyway, ranks in the 19th percentile ([county wildfire risk data](#)). This is a planning-area rating, not a prediction that the yard will start a fire. It shows how many homes are exposed if anything goes wrong, which is why grinding equipment and wood piles belong where a fire would do the least harm.
- **A monastery is next door.** Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery holds meditation retreats with periods of "noble silence" ([retreat listing](#)), and its only driveway is on Settlers Drive.

### 2. The land is restricted to residential use

- **Recorded covenants ban this use.** The 1976 Homestead Filing No. 4 covenants say "No trash, stumps, branches... shall be thrown or dumped or buried on any land within the Subdivision" ([covenants](#), page 5).
- **The owner of this exact parcel confirmed them in 1999** in a recorded, signed amendment that made them permanent ([1999 amendment](#), page 5). They have never been released.

- **The county's own plans say residential.** Its land use map marks the site Large-Lot Suburban Residential, and conformance with adopted plans is one of the five things the Planning Commission must weigh in this review. Its 2045 plan puts processing and outdoor storage yards in industrial areas, with "separation and buffering from residential uses... strongly encouraged" ([2045 plan](#)).

### 3. Turning north out of Settlers Drive is where the crashes happen

About 27,200 vehicles a day pass Settlers Drive at 55 mph, with no signal ([CDOT](#)). Heading north means crossing both southbound lanes, waiting in the median, then merging into northbound traffic.

- **Every turning crash at Settlers Drive was this move.** CDOT records from 2019 to 2025 show 4, each a driver pulling out and turning north who was hit broadside: February 2019, November 2023, July 2024 and July 2025 ([CDOT crash listings](#)).
- **The pattern repeats up the road.** The next two crossings, Mariposa and Sourdough, had 8 more. That is 12 turning crashes and 12 people injured at the three crossings in seven years.
- **The county's fix is a U-turn on the highway.** Its July 2026 video says visitors from the north "will be encouraged to continue south on the highway before making a U-turn" ([county video](#)). That sends trailers to turn around across a 55 mph divided highway somewhere else.
- **CDOT checked capacity, not crashes.** The video says CDOT found volumes "fall well within existing roadway capacity." Capacity is not the problem; the crash record is.
- **Trailers need even bigger gaps.** Highway design standards give a truck about 10 seconds to turn left across a divided road, which at 55 mph is about 825 ft of clear highway each way ([AASHTO, via TxDOT](#)).
- **The haul trucks make this turn every week.** The county says material "will be ground on a weekly schedule and hauled to Jefferson County's larger transfer site in Golden", which is to the north.
- **Loose loads end up on the highway.** In January 2025, CDOT recorded a crash at the Settlers Drive crossing involving debris or cargo in the road. During the 2013 collection, the fire district had to monitor the route "for accidental slash litter".

#### 4. It sits on the fire station's road

- **The station sits between the yard and the highway.** Every truck and trailer going to the yard drives past Fire Station 3's driveway, and leaves through the same US 285 crossing the engines use. A stalled trailer, or a weekend line backing up from the gate, could sit between Station 3 and US 285 and keep engines from reaching the highway at the moment they are needed. A station next door is only a safety benefit if the engines can get out, and the county has not shown that its operation cannot block them.
- **The fire district has already had to manage this.** For one two-day collection in 2013, it rerouted slash traffic "due to past traffic safety concerns along State Highway 285" ([Inter-Canyon Fire](#)).

#### 5. It duplicates slash yards that already exist

- **A private yard about a mile down US 285 already does this.** EnviroWorks, 9054 US 285, takes slash and grinds it year-round, 8 minutes from Conifer against 9 for Settlers Drive ([EnviroWorks](#)).
- **The county's own year-round yard already grinds.** Material from Settlers Drive would be "hailed to Jefferson County's larger transfer site in Golden" every week anyway ([county video](#)).
- **The mountain drop-offs already carry the program.** Elk Creek Elementary and Marshdale took 5,692 cubic yards in 2024, 52% of everything collected ([2024 SLASH report](#)).
- **What Settlers Drive would add is weekend, county-priced drop-off.** A contract can buy that without building a new yard.

### Better options, ranked

Ranked on safety (highway access, fire-station conflicts), neighbors, and how quickly and cheaply the county can do it. Settlers Drive is shown at the bottom for comparison.

| Rank     | Option                                                                                                                                                                | Homes within half a mile                    | Getting on US 285                                       | Already handles slash                                             | Cost to the county                                                                                               |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | <b>Use what already exists:</b> contract EnviroWorks (9054 US 285) for weekend drop-off, extend the Elk Creek Elementary and Marshdale seasons, grind at Tincup Ridge | 85 at EnviroWorks (\$73.2M); none at Tincup | EnviroWorks' existing entrance; Tincup is not on US 285 | Yes, all of them today                                            | No construction; per-load fees. Tincup's \$107,000 expansion and \$7,206 in roll-offs already funded             |
| 2        | <b>Shaffers Crossing industrial yard</b> , 12997 S Elk Creek Rd, Pine                                                                                                 | 39, \$31.8M                                 | Interchange ramps; zero turning crashes 2019 to 2025    | County collection there, July 2022                                | Lease 2 to 3 of its 10.5 acres, or buy (sold for \$910,000 in 2023); the budgeted \$241,811 loader moves with it |
| 3        | <b>County Road &amp; Bridge shop</b> , 13008 Parker Ave, Pine (23.2 ac)                                                                                               | 73, \$49.5M                                 | Unsignalized crossing beside the interchange            | County maintenance yard                                           | Land already owned                                                                                               |
| 4        | <b>CORE Electric yard</b> , 13354 S US 285 Frontage Rd, Pine (8.1 ac)                                                                                                 | 44, \$43.8M                                 | Unsignalized frontage-road junctions                    | Next door to Elk Creek Elementary, the program's busiest drop-off | Partnership with the utility                                                                                     |
| Proposed | Settlers Drive                                                                                                                                                        | <b>157, \$152.6M</b>                        | Unsignalized crossing; 4 turning crashes 2019 to 2025   | Seasonal collections in 2013 and 2022                             | \$561,811 budgeted                                                                                               |

Home counts and values from [county parcel data](#); costs from the [2026 budget](#) and county parcel sale records.

## 1. Use what already exists

No new yard anywhere. This is how Douglas County works: one grinding site on a county waste campus, open about 300 days a year, which handled 32,841 cubic yards in 2025 and is projected to save \$100,000 a year ([Douglas County](#)).

- **Contract EnviroWorks for weekend, county-priced drop-off.** It already grinds year-round about a mile from Settlers Drive, open weekdays 8 to 4. The county already subsidizes drop-offs at its own sites (\$59.47 per drop in 2024). EnviroWorks' request to the county to formally allow slash processing there (case 24-114478RZ) was still in review as of April 2026 ([land use report](#)), and that decision is the county's to make.
- **Extend the Elk Creek Elementary and Marshdale seasons,** hauled out in the 40-yard roll-offs the county is already buying.
- **Grind at Tincup Ridge,** beside the Rooney Road Recycling Center, where Settlers Drive material would go anyway.
- **Add curbside chipping** for residents without a trailer, as Boulder County (1,416 households in 2024) and Summit County do ([Boulder County report](#)).

## 2. Shaffers Crossing industrial yard, if the county wants its own mountain yard

The only site on the corridor that is industrial land, has few neighbors and connects to US 285 by ramps instead of a crossing. US 285 passes over Elk Creek Road on bridges built in 2010 ([bridge record](#)). It is the same 9-minute drive from Conifer as Settlers Drive and 14 minutes closer for Pine and Bailey. The county held four weekends of slash collection at this interchange in July 2022 ([2022 schedule](#)). The owner, Bailey Industrial LLC, met with the county in December 2025 about amending the site's development plan ([land use report](#)), so the timing is right to ask.

## 3 and 4. County shop and CORE Electric yard

Both sit near the Shaffers Crossing interchange and have less than half of Settlers' neighbors within half a mile, but both reach US 285 through unsignalized crossings. The county already owns the Parker Ave shop. CORE Electric's crews also clear trees along power lines, which makes the utility a natural partner.

## What we are asking for

Before the county files for Location and Extent approval at Settlers Drive:

1. **Compare these options in public**, on the same terms: homes nearby, highway access and crash history, fire-station conflicts, land restrictions and 20-year cost. We found no published comparison of sites; Settlers Drive was chosen through a land swap.
2. **Ask the Shaffers Crossing owner** about a lease or sale, and **ask EnviroWorks** for a per-load price with weekend hours.
3. **Ask the fire district on the record** whether yard traffic on Settlers Drive could delay engines leaving Station 3.
4. **Publish the studies.** Release the sensory impact study behind the claim that noise will stay within state limits, CDOT's traffic review, and the yard's yearly operating cost. The county says the yard will be "staffed daily" with equipment kept on site, a cost the \$561,811 budget does not cover.

The decision goes through a public Planning Commission hearing within 30 days of the county's filing, and the County Commissioners have the final say ([Zoning Resolution, Section 8](#)).

## Sources

**Recorded documents** (free images at [landrecords.co.jefferson.co.us](https://landrecords.co.jefferson.co.us), Real Estate search by instrument number):

| Reception              | Date       | What it is                                                                          |
|------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 819506 (Bk 2908 Pg 31) | 9/27/1976  | Homestead Filing No. 4 protective covenants ( <a href="#">copy</a> )                |
| 80022148               | 3/20/1980  | Filing 4 Exemption Survey: resubdivides Filing 4 lots                               |
| F0768590               | 12/31/1998 | Filing 4 Amendment No. 7: creates Parcel 8                                          |
| F0997932               | 1999       | Covenant amendment; page 5 signed by the owner of Parcel 8 ( <a href="#">copy</a> ) |
| 2018096967             | 10/24/2018 | Homestead Filing 10 plat: Tract A from Parcel 8                                     |
| 2023067400             | 11/2/2023  | Resolution CC23-268: releases school restrictions on the old school tract only      |
| 2024006925             | 2/7/2024   | Filing 10 Adjustment 1: creates Tract A2 (8.50 ac)                                  |

| Reception  | Date      | What it is                                            |
|------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 2024007875 | 2/13/2024 | Deed, Terra Investments to Jefferson County, Tract A2 |

### County documents:

- [Settlers Drive project page](#), [proposed design](#), [2024 FAQ](#)
- Announcements: [October 2023](#), [February 2024](#)
- [2026 Parks & Open Space financial plan](#), [2024 SLASH Year End Report](#), [2025 Annual Report](#)
- [Zoning Resolution Section 8](#), [Together Jeffco 2045 plan](#), [Conifer/285 Corridor Area Plan](#)
- County GIS: [parcels and assessed values](#), [future land use](#), [street intersections](#)
- [2022 SLASH collection schedule](#)

### Other sources:

- [CDOT statewide crash listings, 2019 to 2025](#): every crash within 1,000 ft of the Settlers, Mariposa and Sourdough crossings and the Shaffers Crossing interchange
- [CDOT traffic and safety segments](#): 27,200 vehicles a day at Settlers Drive
- [AASHTO turning gaps, as published by TxDOT](#)
- [Conifer Area Council land use report, April 2026](#): EnviroWorks case 24-114478RZ (in review) and the Shaffers Crossing pre-application
- [EnviroWorks](#)
- [Douglas County slash-mulch operations](#)
- [Boulder County wildfire mitigation report, 2024](#) and [Summit County chipping program](#)
- [Inter-Canyon Fire, August 2013 traffic notice](#)
- [US 285 bridge over Elk Creek Rd](#)
- [C.R.S. 25-12-103, noise limits](#)
- [Monastery retreat listing](#)
- [County project video, July 2026](#): U-turn plan, CDOT capacity review, noise study, weekly hauling to Golden

Prepared by Homestead residents from public records. This is not legal advice.