



City of Laramie

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LARAMIE PLANNING COMMISSION February 28, 2022 STAFF REPORT

FILE: TA-22-01 R1, LR and RR Zoning District's Dimensional Standards/Use Regulations, Text Amendments

REQUEST: This amendment to sections within 15.10, 15.12 and 15.14 is brought forward as standard practice to update the Unified Development Code

APPLICANT: City of Laramie

PURPOSE: To update Laramie Municipal Code as a best practice approach to updating codes to addressing housing affordability in the community.

PREPARED BY: Philipp Gabathuler, AICP Principal Planner

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Staff recommends that the City Planning Commission **approve** amendments to LMC 15.10, 15.12 and 15.14 for the purpose of updating Laramie Municipal Code as a necessary, regular practice and to address housing affordability in the community.

APPLICABLE CODE SECTION(S):

Text Amendments must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council. Planning Commission action is forwarded to the City Council as a recommendation.

- Laramie Municipal Code Title 15, Unified Development Code
- Wyoming State Statutes Title 15 Cities and Towns, Article 5 Planning
- Wyoming State Statutes Title 15 Cities and Towns, Article 6 Zoning
- Laramie Comprehensive Plan
- Thrive Laramie Community and Economic Development Action Strategy

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY:

The present amendment is initiated by the City of Laramie as part of the continual effort to keep the Unified Development Code (UDC) accurate, correct concerns, and remove potential avenues of confusion. All prior revisions to LMC Chapter 15 (Unified Development Code) can be found online at www.cityoflaramie.org/UDC.

This text amendment is focused on:

- Dimensional changes within the R1, RR and LR zoning districts, as well as corresponding corrections based off the recommended changes in the dimensional table. City Council had a work session on January 25, 2022 which highlighted these changes and the purpose of them.
- The addition of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs hereafter) into the R1, RR, and LR zoning districts.
- The removal of the garage requirement in R1 and LR zoning districts.

Past Studies

The studies and accommodating links provide data that supports this text amendment to help increase housing affordability in Laramie:

- [Thrive Laramie: A Community and Economic Development Action Strategy for the Next 10 Years:](#)

Through the process of the Thrive Laramie Economic Development Plan and Housing Study, a survey was conducted to study what housing types are missing from Laramie that people would like to see and need. Through this survey, staff found that the public desires the traditional housing type in single-family housing, but they also wanted to see housing types such as cottage courts and ADUs. These housing types have another name associated with them, which is “Missing Middle.” Currently, the way our dimensional standards (codes) are written, they are restrictive to these “missing middle” housing styles and flexible development options.

- [Housing Study 2030:](#)

The need for lower lot costs is outlined in the Laramie Housing Study 2030. Currently, more affordable housing options are simply not being built by developers because lot costs are too high. Appraisers value land on a sqft. basis, therefore the smaller lots being proposed by these text amendments would be more affordable than larger ones. Giving developers the flexibility of creating smaller lot subdivisions by decreasing the minimum lot size would therefore provide more affordable lots.

The average wage earner in Laramie qualifies for a \$250,000 house but the average single family house is \$325,000. The text amendments proposed will not instantly erase this gap and fix the housing problem in Laramie—low wages, supply chain issues, and the exodus from traditional job centers—are not within the purview of government to solve. However, narrowing the gap by adopting policies that will help drive down development costs is within the City’s purview and abilities.

- [2020 Laramie Code Audit](#): (This study focused on the R2, R3, and DC zone districts; but the principles remain the same across all residential types.)

This study outlines how the development code in Laramie is a possible barrier to building the housing choices that are needed. Essentially, the code audit defined affordability using Census data and measured the impact of various housing options on affordability.

This plan also speaks to the fact that no language currently exists in code that allows for Accessory Dwelling Units—a highly desired housing type in Laramie. This lack of guidance has caused many good ADU projects to be rejected or fly under the radar without proper permitting.

Like blueprints for a neighborhood, zoning codes can dictate how a neighborhood is shaped and what type of structures will or can be built. Because zoning codes are written and enforced entirely on the local level, they are expected to change and shift over time as the community’s needs change. These changes will allow developers greater flexibility in developing the types of housing that are desired in the community. With the adoption of these proposed changes, members of the public should expect to see more densely developed future subdivisions and additional ADUs in existing neighborhoods.

- [Laramie Housing Strategy 2020](#):

The Laramie Housing Strategy also includes supporting information for the inclusion of Accessory Dwelling Units into the City’s Code. The study states that “ADUs give an entry way for individuals who struggle to afford homes in difficult and tight housing markets such as Laramie by providing an additional income to homeowners that will help reduce the cost of mortgages while providing an affordable rental unit.” ADUs will create new housing units while respecting the scale of single-family residential districts, support more efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure and provide housing that responds to increasing housing costs and smaller households.

- [Comprehensive Plan](#):

Within Chapter 5 of the Laramie Comprehensive Plan, it states that building codes and regulations should be developed to allow for flexibility, which in turn may reduce costs or allow for alternative design. Moving forward with the 2007 Laramie Comprehensive Plan, the city has conducted the 2015 Housing Study, Thrive Laramie Economic Development Plan, Thrive Housing Study and the Thrive Code Audit as follow-up and updated support found in the Comprehensive Plan related to housing. All these documents have come together to

recommend changes in code related to housing which is needed for a stronger Economic climate, as well as strategies on how to solve our housing challenges. The planning effort put into the Comprehensive Plan and follow-up documents and studies shows the long time commitment by the community related to housing; these proposed change put into action what is recommended by these plans.

Case Study: How smaller lots economize land and lower the burden on infrastructure



This example uses the Coughlin Pole Mountain 3rd addition, 12th filing Final Plat to outline how decreasing the minimum lot size could affect potential new development. (This example is just an estimate used to illustrate costs).

			Infrastructure development costs			Developer proceeds estimate	
			Plant Investment Fee/Meter Fee (\$10,000 per unit). Builder/resident pays this (Not developer).	800 linear feet of Water Main (10" PVC) at \$50/per LF	800 linear feet of Sewer Main (8" PVC) at \$115/ per LF	Current Estimate of Lot	Proceeds
	Square ft.	Max Lots					
Proposed Minimum lot size	4,000	47	\$470,000	\$40,000	\$92,000	\$45,000	\$1,998,492
Current Minimum lot size	5,000	38	\$380,000	\$40,000	\$92,000	\$55,000	\$1,951,148
Actual development final platted	10,515	15	\$150,000	\$40,000	\$92,000	\$85,000	\$1,143,000

Proposed Changes:

The proposed changes are shown below by either striking out current text or by adding new language, shown by bold and underlined text.

1. Update LMC Table 15.12-2: Dimensional Requirements – Residential Districts

- The purpose of this change is to allow a greater range of housing typology and flexibility within the R1, RR and LR zoning districts and to correct any subtext needed if changes are approved. Changes shown below will reduce minimum lot widths, minimum setbacks and minimum lot sizes.

District	Use	Minimum Lot Width (ft)
RR	Principal Building	30 75
	Accessory Building	
LR	Principal Building	30 60
	Accessory Building	
R1	Principal Building	30 55
	Accessory Building	

- Decreasing minimum lot widths allows for development of more houses.
- Decreasing minimum lot widths allows for more efficient use of land.

District	Use	Minimum Lot Area (sqft)
RR	Principal Building	8,000 16,000
	Accessory Building	
LR	Principal Building	5,000 7,000
	Accessory Building	
R1	Principal Building	4,000 5,000
	Accessory Building	

- Decreasing minimum lot size allow for development of more houses.
- Smaller lots promote affordable housing options.
- Smaller lots use fewer municipal resources to maintain.

Existing Setback Requirements

District	Use	Front (ft)	Side (ft)	Rear (ft)
RR	Principal Building	35	10	10
	Accessory Building	60	5	5
LR	Principal Building	25	5	7
	Accessory Building	45	5	3
R1	Principal Building	20	5	5
	Accessory Building	45	3	3

- Decreasing minimum setback requirements would allow for more usable building space.

Recommended Setback Requirements

District	Use	Front (ft)	Side (ft)	Rear (ft)
RR	Principal Building	10	5	5
	Accessory Building	60	5	5
LR	Principal Building	10	5	5
	Accessory Building	45	5	3
R1	Principal Building	10	5	5
	Accessory Building	45	3	3

2. Update LMC 15.14.080.C.4.a.(ii) garages in order to eliminate garage requirement from LR and R1 zoning districts.

a. All single family dwellings in the LR and R1 districts shall have a garage. This requirement may be waived by the City Manager’s Office for permanent affordable or work force housing.

3. Update LMC 15.10.030.D Additional Standards for Specific Accessory Uses and Structures

Definition:

~~124. Dwelling, Accessory "Dwelling, accessory" means living quarters provided for the sole use of persons (and their families) that are employed on the premises where a principal use exists. (Ord. 1344 § 2 (part), 2001).~~

Change to:

Accessory Dwelling Unit: means living quarters within a single family zoned property (R1, LR, RR) that can be attached or detached from the principal structure.

4. Update LMC 15.10.030.C.5. to assure that ADUs have separate metering.

~~15.10.030.C.5. Same Utility Meter Required The principal use and the accessory use shall utilize the same utility meter, with the exception of an approved accessory dwelling unit.~~

Change to:

15.10.030.C.5. Same Utility Meter Required The principal use and the accessory use shall utilize the same utility meter, with the exception of an approved accessory dwelling unit **for all one and two-family dwellings.**

5. Update LMC 15.16.030.A. to correct an error to referenced code section on Condominium Subdivision. No additional standard addressing the condo'ing process is necessary in the Accessory Dwelling Unit language below because it is covered in LMC 15.06.060.T.

The procedure for creating a subdivision is located in section 15.06.060.O Subdivisions, Major. The procedure for creating a condominium subdivision is located in ~~section 15.16.060.T Subdivisions, Condominium~~ **section 15.06.060.T** Condominium.

6. Add language to LMC 15.10.030.D to accommodate the allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units.

5. Accessory Dwelling Units

a. Standards

In districts where accessory dwelling units are allowed as permitted uses, they shall meet the following standards in addition to all other lot and building standards for the district.

- 1. The accessory dwelling unit may be attached or detached from the principal structure on the property.**

2. All applicable lot and principal building type standards for the district shall apply.
 3. Only one accessory dwelling unit is permitted per detached one-unit dwelling lot in any zoning district where accessory dwellings are allowed as permitted use.
 4. Accessory dwelling units must have a separate access from the principal structure.
 5. Accessory dwelling units must have separate utility access from principal structure.
 6. The building footprint of the accessory dwelling unit may be to 40 percent of the building footprint of the principal dwelling unit or 600 square feet, whichever amount is lesser.
 7. The maximum square footage of an accessory dwelling shall be no more than 1200 square feet. ADUs must have a minimum square footage of 220 square feet.
 8. The unit size limitations found in LMC 15.10.030.D.5.a.7 shall apply to ADUs within the principal structures.
 9. The accessory dwelling unit may not exceed the height of the principal structure.
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PUBLIC COMMENTS:

This amendment was legally advertised in the Laramie Boomerang on February 13, 2022. Staff has received no comments regarding this proposed amendment to Laramie Municipal Code.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The amendment is found to be in accordance with substantive and procedural requirements and necessities in City of Laramie code and best planning practice.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The amendment is proceeding in accordance with applicable law, including LMC Title 15.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Planning Commission **approve** amendments to LMC 15.10, 15.12 and 15.14 for the purpose of updating Laramie Municipal Code as a necessary, regular practice and to address housing affordability in the community.

ATTACHMENTS: (n/a)