

City of Laramie

Community Development Department
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LARAMIE PLANNING COMMISSION June 22, 2020 STAFF REPORT

FILE: TA-20-01 Downtown UDC Update

REQUEST: An amendment to sections within 15.14 and 15.08.030.E of LMC as a code update for the DC Zoning District.

APPLICANT: City of Laramie

PURPOSE: To update Laramie Municipal Code as a best practice approach to updating codes for a community.

PREPARED BY: Matthew Cox, Associate Planner

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Move to recommend that the City Council **approve** amendments to LMC 15.14 and 15.08.030.E for the purposes of updating Laramie Municipal Code as a necessary, regular practice.

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

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.

The proposed text updates will encourage development within the DC District and put in place best downtown development best practices that will promote development, while also ensuring a more vibrant downtown by ensuring higher quality design and land use. Downtown Laramie is the first

place that many visitors see when they enter our city. Staff believes that this text amendment will contribute to the sustainable growth and aesthetic appeal of our downtown, and will continue to contribute to our downtown as the zoning district expands its boundaries.

The amendments and updates within this UDC Text Amendment have been gathered through efforts of City Staff and Laramie Main Street throughout the past few years. These amendments and additions were also prompted through project experience, new business models, enquiries from the public and staff's constant effort to improve Laramie's UDC as development continues to evolve.

The proposed amendments have been presented to the Laramie Main Street for review. Laramie Main Street has shown its support for these code updates and has also been present throughout the process of the update and creation of these codes. A letter of support has been provided by Laramie Main Street of which is attached to this staff report. Within the letter, Main Street has identified design code, updated parking standards and update sign design standards as top priorities within their Downtown Development Plan. Once these codes are adopted, they will reinstitute the popular Façade Grant program to provide a cash match to private property owners and businesses to help them implement changes to the exterior of their buildings.

PROPOSED CODE CHANGES:

- Updated façade materials and percent allowed
 - The purpose for this change is to avoid a non-historic material being used as the primary façade material for a building, to ensure a more accurate historic aesthetic for our Downtown Commercial Zoning District. The Downtown Commercial Zoning District is the part of town where a significant amount of the Laramie commerce happens and due to this, sees many visitors from outside of Laramie. Ensuring that our facades are aesthetically appealing and high quality creates a more vibrant area of town and a place that locals and business owners can appreciate more. The reason for choosing to prohibit the materials below are that they are not of historic nature and have already been prohibited within our gateway Overlay Zones and along Collector and Arterial Streets.

Current Code 15.14.090.D Design Standards:

15.14.090.D. Building Design

1. Materials and Colors

- **a.** All primary exterior building materials on principal buildings shall be durable, economically maintained, and of a high quality that will retain its appearance over time, including but not limited to, brick, sandstone, natural or synthetic stone, and tinted/textured concrete masonry units. Refer to Table 15.14.090-1 regarding the use of metal siding, smooth-faced CMU block or tilt-up panels. This section shall not prohibit the use of metal siding designed to look like clapboard siding, metal trim, soffits,

fascia, gutters, corners, and standing seam roofing or specific architectural elements or features (Ord. 1625 § 35, 2012).

- b. Building materials, except glass, shall be of low reflectance and finished in subtle, neutral or earth tone colors (brown, tan, grey, green, blue, red in muted, flat colors) characteristic of the soil types and vegetation found in Laramie (Ord. 1596 § 47 & 48, 2011)

Table 15.14.090-1: Metal Siding, Smooth-faced CMU Block, and Tilt-up Panel Matrix, Commercial, Industrial and Institutional					
Use Type	Zone District	Percent Allowed, Principal Buildings			
		Primary Building Façade	Façade facing Arterial or Collect or Street	Façade facing Local Street	Façade not facing right-of-way
Agricultural	AG	100	100	100	100
Institutional/ Non-Residential Use	RR, LR, R1, R2, R2M, R3	0	0	50	50
Commercial	NB	0	0	0	0
	B1	0	0	50	50
	B2	0	0	50	100
	DC	0	0	0	0
	C2	0	0	50	100
Technology / Industrial	LM	100	100	100	100
	IP	0	50	100	100
	I1	100	100	100	100
	I2	100	100	100	100
	O	25	25	25	25
Aviation	AV	100	100	100	100
	AE	0	50	100	100

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- c. **DC design standards must comply with Table 15.14.090-1 and Section 15.08.030.E**

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Proposed Amendment 15.08.030.E.2.c.(vii).(4) Materials:

(4) Materials

All primary exterior building materials within the DC district shall adhere to the standards set forth under table 15.14.090-1 and 15.08.030-4, as well as section 15.14.090 within the Laramie Municipal Code.

Table 15.08.030-1: Material percentage allowed within the DC District				
		Percent allowed, principal buildings per side		
Zone District	Frontage	Stucco	Natural finished wood	Synthetic stone & stone masonry
DC	Storefront	0	0	0
	Façade facing any right-of-way	20	0	20
	Façade not facing right-of-way	100	0	100

**Planning commission amended text to read “new primary structures”

- Updated minimum and maximum building heights for the DC District

- The DC District is the densest development district within Laramie and staff believes that the district could be more dense and that the limits of height should be expanded and not allowed to drop below two stories in order to continue the dense development of the DC District and promote efficient land use in this zoning district. Currently building height is regulated by existing buildings on the block and not district wide, as it is evaluated in other zoning districts. In evaluating the maximum height, existing buildings were measured and the maximum height limit was based off of these existing buildings and increasing them one floor higher. The minimum two story is based off of increasing density in our downtown and ensuring that all new construction is at least two stories.

Current Code 15.08.030.E.2.b.(ii) Maximum and Minimum Building Heights:

The height of each primary structure in the DC District shall meet the building height requirements of the Design Guidelines in the area where they apply. In areas where the Design Guidelines do not apply, the maximum and minimum height of primary structures shall meet the following standards, as applicable. The maximum building height shown on Table 15.12-3 does not apply in the DC district.

- (1) No primary or accessory structure shall be taller than (a) the tallest building on the block face where the proposed building is located, or (b) 12 feet taller than the tallest building on the block across the street from the front façade of the proposed structure, whichever is less. (See Figure 15.08-18.)

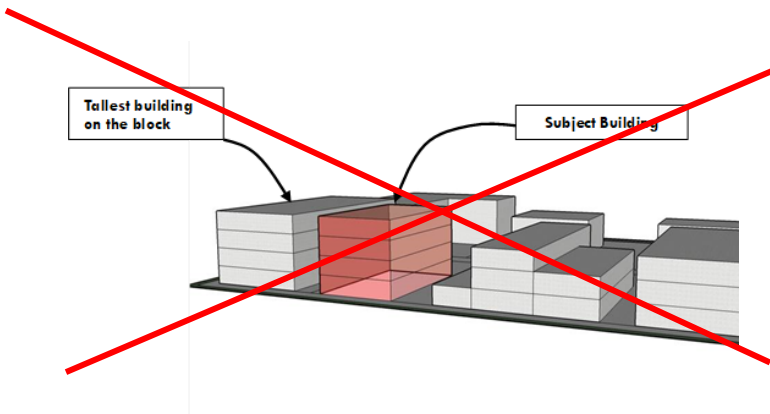


Figure 15.08-18: No primary structure may be taller than the tallest building on the block, or more than 12 feet taller than the tallest building on the block face across the street, whichever is less.

Proposed Amendment 15.08.030.E.2.b.(ii):

- (ii) **Maximum and Minimum Building Heights**

Within the DC district, the maximum and minimum height of new primary structures shall meet the following standards.

- 1. The minimum height of a structure within the DC Zoning District shall be 30 feet.**
- 2. The maximum height of a structure within the DC Zoning District shall be 80 feet.**

- Update code to prohibit temporary banners within the DC District
 - Temporary banners are a non-aesthetic part of our downtown that have been allowed to persist without serious time stipulations, allowing storefronts to avoid signage that would actually benefit the vibrancy of our downtown. This is already the case for our gateway Overlay District, similar requirements for our downtown commercial district are also appropriate based on the similar amount of traffic each sees and visual importance.

Proposed Addition 15.08.030.E.2.c.(xii).(15):

(15) Commercial outdoor temporary signs and banners are prohibited except those permitted per LMC Section 15.14.120.C.4 Temporary Signs.

- Regulate percent of transparency required for public facing storefronts
 - Transparent storefronts increase the visibility of retail uses and in turn increase pedestrian activity and sales for these retailers. A transparent storefront welcomes customers inside with products and services on display, discourages crime with more “eyes on the street”, reduces energy consumption by letting in natural light, and enhances curb appeal and value of the store and the entire neighborhood. The built environment has the power to activate the public realm, providing a comfortable and safe place for people.

Current Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(vii).(1) Transparency:

(1) Transparency

~~A minimum of ten percent of each façade area that faces a street must be composed of transparent materials. At least 1/2 of this amount must be provided so that the lowest edge of the transparent materials is no higher than four feet above the street level.~~

Proposed Amendment 15.08.030.E.2.c.(vii).(1) Transparency:

(1) Transparency

Within the DC District, a minimum of 70 percent of the ground level floor square area that faces a street must be transparent. The lowest edge of transparency cannot be higher than 2 feet off the ground. For floors that are above the ground floor and abutting a street, a minimum of 50 percent of that floors linear feet must be transparent with a minimum of 4 foot tall windows.

If an existing structure within the DC District does not comply with the standards set out under Section 15.08.030.E.2.c.(vii).(1), the transparency of that existing structure may be permitted by the Planning Commission, provided that the following regulations and procedures are followed:

- (a) Application for Historical or Culturally Significant Building is completed and submitted, per the City's Codes Administrative Manual;**
- (b) The Planning Commission holds a public hearing on the request, following the general notice procedures as specified in Section 15.06 of this Title;**
- (c) The Planning Commission approves the request, adopting findings supporting historical or cultural significance of the requested transparency, and directs the City Manager's Office to issue approval of the transparency request through the Site Plan Application.**

Criteria to determine a finding of historical or cultural significance include, but are not limited to: Wyoming or Western character; nostalgic significance; character, design, or materials that represent a particular historical period; landmark recognition; and character or design that are recognizably important to one or more cultures. Historic or cultural nature of the building may be

significant to society generally or in the context of the Laramie community particularly.

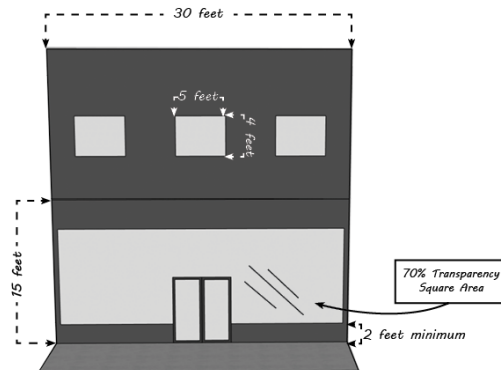


Figure 15.08-A: Dimensions describing the requirements for transparency within the DC District

- Include Patio design standards for the DC District
 - The purpose for this change is to avoid patio's designed without permanence in mind or that are aesthetically unappealing. Similar design standards to that of the building's façade should be also upheld for patios due to their use and their visibility to the public. High quality design and materials in a pedestrian oriented environment such as in the DC Zoning District is important in preserving a vibrant and viable downtown.

Proposed Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(xv) Patio Design and Materials:

(xv) Patio Design and Materials

- (1) **If a patio is located abutting a right-of-way, the portion that abuts the right-of-way shall be fenced or restricted from access to the public other than by an ADA accessible opening and users of that building and space.**
- (2) **The fence or wall must be designed so that it is transparent above 4 feet or limits its height to 4 feet.**
- (3) **All fences and walls must be constructed out of one of the following approved materials:**
 - (a) **Wrought Iron**
 - (b) **Brick**
 - (c) **Tile**
 - (d) **Similar material to that of the building it's connected to**
 - (e) **Decorative Fencing or other material (As approved by the City Manager's Office)**

(4) All construction shall be of durable, high-quality materials

- Update protruding signage size
 - Staff has found that the maximum size allowed for protruding signs within the DC district is very limiting and staff and community partners believe that protruding signs can positively impact the aesthetics and marketing ability of businesses and uses in downtown. Protruding signs allow for a visual reference when looking down the street rather than having to be right in front of the store.

Current Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(xii).(3), (4), (5):

- (3) Projecting signs shall not project over public property more than ~~1/3~~ the distance from the building to the curb, and not project into a public alley or public parking lot. A sign shall not project over the street line. Projecting signs shall fit within the architectural features of the building and be a minimum of eight feet above the ground.
- (4) Projecting signs shall not exceed ~~15~~ square feet per building face.
- (5) Corner projecting signs are encouraged and shall not exceed ~~15~~ square feet per face.

Amended Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(xii).(3), (4), (5):

- (3) Projecting signs shall not project over public property more than 1/2 the distance from the building to the curb, and not project into a public alley or public parking lot. A sign shall not project over the street line. Projecting signs shall fit within the architectural features of the building and be a minimum of eight feet above the ground.
- (4) Projecting signs shall not exceed 30 square feet per building face.
- (5) Corner projecting signs are encouraged and shall not exceed 45 square feet per face.

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- Propose Minimum Building Footprint
 - The DC District should be the most densely developed area of our City and all space should be maximized as much as possible. This code update will require a minimum use of the lot rather than only building on a portion of a lot and leaving valuable land vacant and unused.

Proposed Code 15.08.030.E.2.b.(i).(6):

(6). All buildings shall have a minimum footprint of 80 percent of the lot square footage. A patio may constitute 20 percent of

the required footprint. All stories above the ground floor shall have a minimum 60 percent of the lot footprint.

- Remove Maximum Building Size
 - Staff believes that putting a limit on building height restricts the size of a building enough and that having a maximum of 65,000 square feet would not allow certain lots to be built to their full potential if the developer decides to go up to the maximum height of 80 feet.

Current Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(vi):

~~(vi). No single primary building shall have more than 65,000 square feet of gross floor area.~~

- Propose no parking requirements for residential development in DC District
 - Requiring parking for residential uses within the DC District restricts investment, density and development in our DC District based on the amount of land a developer loses when required to provide parking for residential uses. Currently all commercial development in the DC Zone is not required to provide parking. Not requiring parking downtown for residential development will bring more residential units downtown, bringing a larger population to the area that will shop at the local retailers within walking distance of their residence. Generally the residential units will be more affordable based on the size of possible units, such as studios and one-bedroom units. Elimination of parking requirements with the DC Zoning District also aligns with the pedestrian nature of the district and the desire for a higher density development. Below are some resources explaining the reasoning behind this amendment:
 - <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/11/24/every-city-should-abolish-its-minimum-parking-requirements-has-yours>
 - <https://www.planning.org/planning/2018/oct/peopleoverparking/>

Current Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(ii).(2):

- ~~(1) Commercial development within the DC District Boundaries shall be exempt from the off-street parking standards of section 15.14.040.~~
- ~~(2) For residential development within the DC district, the minimum off-street parking requirements of Table 15.14.040-3 shall be reduced to 75% of the amount required in other zone districts. If the property is located within 660 feet of a public parking lot, the minimum off-street parking requirements shall be 50% of the amount shown in Table 15.14.040-3.~~
- ~~(3) No off-street loading or parking area shall be located closer to the street frontage than the front façade of the principal structure.~~

Amended Code 15.08.030.E.2.c.(ii).(2):

- (1) **Commercial and Residential development within the DC District Boundaries shall be exempt from the off-street parking standard of section 15.14.040.**
- (2) **All Multifamily Residential development shall adhere to Table 15.14.040-2 Multifamily Accessible Parking if on-site parking is provided.**
- (3) No off-street loading or parking area shall be located closer to the street frontage than the front façade of the principal structure.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

This amendment was legally advertised in the Laramie Boomerang on March 7, 2020. 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 Council **approve** amendments to LMC 15.14 and 15.08.030.E for the purpose of updating Laramie Municipal Code as a necessary, regular practice.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. LMSA Letter of Support (2 pages)
2. Cascadia Letter of Support (1 page)
3. Public Comments (1 page)