

AGENDA
CITY OF LARAMIE, WYOMING
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 406 IVINSON AVE
TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 2021, 6:00 PM
(VIA ZOOM MEETING)

City Council Meetings are open to the public. Council Chambers seating is unavailable at this time due to social distancing. We encourage the use of the following tools to participate: watch live meetings on YouTube Live Feed (www.youtube.com/cityoflaramie/live), Cable Channel 191, or Zoom Webinar- Meeting ID: 882 3669 6573 Passcode: 975904 via internet, app, or telephone 1(669)900-9128. Public comments during the meeting can be provided via Zoom meeting. Public comments may also be submitted via email: council@cityoflaramie.org. Please email: clerk@cityoflaramie.org to request to make public comment during speaking time by no later than 3:00 pm on the day the meeting is to occur. Position of speaking will be assigned by lottery. Requests for accommodations from persons with disabilities must be made to the City Manager's Office 24 hours in advance of a meeting.

Please be advised no additional agenda item will be introduced at a Regular City Council meeting after the hour of 9:30 pm, unless the majority of the City Council members present vote to extend the meeting.

Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. Written public comment shall be submitted to the City Clerk for dissemination and retention for official City records, or submitted to the City Council through electronic correspondence at council@cityoflaramie.org. Full text available in Council Rules of Procedure and Code of Conduct 4.02 and Appendix B and C.

Written materials relative to an agenda item shall be submitted six (6) days in advance of the meeting (sooner if there are holidays prior to the meeting) in order that copies may be included with the agenda and to give the council an opportunity to review the material in advance of the appearance.

Zoom Link: <https://cityoflaramie.zoom.us/j/88236696573?pwd=bkNwZjNpMXJnNFFUaGh1T3JxbEZ4QT09>

- 1. WORK SESSION**
- 2. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items (Aggregate time limit 30 minutes)**
(Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.)
- 3. WORK SESSION: Laramie Housing**

Documents:

[City Council Cover Sheet Work Session 6.22.2021.pdf](#)
[Jame Johnson Housing Study-for 6-2 Council Meeting 6-14-21_Redacted.pdf](#)

- 4. City Council Updates/Council Comments**

5. Agenda Review

6. Public Comments

(Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.)

CITY OF LARAMIE COUNCIL WORK SESSION June 22, 2021



Agenda Item: Presentation

Title: Laramie Housing

Recommended Council MOTION:

No action required for work session items.

Administrative or Policy Goal:

Council Goal: A-Milestone #1 – Continue execution of the *Thrive! Economic Development Plan* with Partner Entities and Review and Re-boot the Plan as necessary to reflect the Post-Pandemic Economy.

Council Goal: A-Milestone #3 – Review results of *Development Code Audit* & Consider revision as may be needed to facilitate growth and development while also preserving the community high standards.

Council Goal: A-Milestone #4 – Review methods for improving resident housing options, including but not limited to Land Banking, Setback Requirements,/Density, In-Fill Development Standards, and Rental Inspection /Licensing.

Background:

Housing is an extremely important aspect in every community and the housing “health” of a community can positively or negatively impact it. With Albany County being No. 1 in the state for people spending more than half their income on housing, housing has been a topic of discussion for Laramie residents and elected officials.

Over the years the City has noted housing as an issue within plans and completed studies including the following.

- 2007 Comprehensive Plan
- 2013 Turner Tract Plan
- 2011 Downtown Development Plan
- 2015 Laramie Housing Study: 2030
- 2018 Albany County Housing Report
- 2019 North 4th Redevelopment Plan
- 2020 Thrive Laramie Community and Economic Development Action Strategy
- 2020 Thrive Laramie Housing (Community Engagement Summary, Laramie Housing Strategy 2020 and 2020 Laramie Code Audit)

Staff anticipates using this work session to introduce and re-engage the Council related to housing issues and topics for Laramie. The presentation will provide an overview of Laramie’s housing “health” and then address more recent planning efforts related to housing. Because of the complexity of the housing topic for Laramie, future meetings with Council and Planning

Commission will be needed to fully consider the housing topic and provide necessary direction to staff on how to proceed with addressing Laramie’s housing needs.

Responsible Staff:

Janine Jordan, City Manager,
721-5226

Derek Teini, AICP, Planning Manager,
721-5245

Future dates are subject to change

Work Session	
Advertised	
Public Hearing Held	
Public Hearing Advertised	
Introduction/1 st Reading	
2 nd Reading	
3 rd Reading	

Attachments:

Public Comment – James Johnson – 6-12-2021

Nancy Bartholomew

From: Derek Teini
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 11:07 AM
To: Nancy Bartholomew
Cc: Todd Feezer
Subject: FW: Housing Study - for 6/22 Council Meeting

Nancy,

Can you provide this public comment to Council prior to the June 22, 2021 meeting. Thank you.

Derek T. Teini, AICP

Planning Manager
City of Laramie, Planning Division
PO Box C, Laramie, Wyoming 82073
307.721.5245 | FAX 307.721.5248
www.cityoflaramie.org



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, June 12, 2021 10:11 AM
To: Derek Teini <DTeini@cityoflaramie.org>
Subject: Housing Study - for 6/22 Council Meeting

[External]

These attached comments come from my experience in working for or with entry level housing builders in Cheyenne. Note Cheyenne has about 6 contractors that seek to specialize in this market, with a volume of 5 + units per year (goal of more like 20). This creates a market driven situation, where the potential buyer demand dictates numerous aspects.

Note I also refer to a Larmie Development Code item which increased the cost of an entry level home by \$30,000 aprox. This is based upon a friendly conversation with such a builder who has both Cheyenne and Laramie experience.

IN particular:

1. I do not like this as a personal taste matter. But in Cheyenne, almost all entry level housing demand is for a front entry garage, with minimum 20 ft garage width (double). The Laramie Code provisions limiting the garage portion of the front facade have the effect of dictating homes on wider lots. Lot width is directly related to lot cost.
2. The Laramie Code provisions to limit the front protusion of a garage have an understandable basis, and I tend to agree as a matter of my own taste. However, when the noted builder applied this provision to their basic entry level home, the inset of the garage required increasing the basic home size by about 200 sft. These people have extensive entry level experience, and a vigorous system of tracking costs, and adjusting their model designs. SO, I would tend to believe them when they tell me this provision added that amount to the costs.
3. 4-plex, 2-plex, or row housing construction is percieved as riskier, in both Cheyenne and Laramie. IN particular, the severe cost limitations of potential buyers bump into some higher cost of connected housing construction. Fire separation walls, fire sprinkler systems, appraisal reductions (which affect maximum sales prices), Certainly individuals have made this type of development work profitably, however the builders I have dealt with are quite careful about these projects. If

they try one 4-plex, and it sells slowly, then they are quite careful about doing another one. With respect to Laramie's current zoning or code requirements, I do not think any given provision affects this financial calculation for a builder.

4. The "entry level" home that all Cheyenne builders provide is clearly established by the market demand of buyers. It has certain things I personally do not agree with. But in Cheyenne (and I suspect in Laramie) those potential buyers want:

A. Master bedroom suite with attached bathroom, and somewhat oversized closet.

B. (2) secondary bedrooms of about 120 sft, with closet, and a convenient full bathroom.

C. Great Room, or open layout floor that includes a kitchen, living area, and possibly a "eating nook". There is a lot of direct competition in trying to provide an upgrade kitchen appearance at least cost.

D. Attached garage, minimum double, with 3 part garages becoming very popular at present. The builders I know tend to prefer to add a little space to a garage, as it is fairly cheap per sq ft, and they perceive the garage as the item that "sells" to the male side of a potential homebuyer couple. IN particular with Laramie's code a 3 stall garage forces the home width to increase to the extent it is impossible to meet the "entry level" market.

E. Landscaping package, namely sod, perimeter graveled surfaces, backyard fence, sprinkler system, and a tree or two. 15 years back a few builders tried to sell entry level homes without landscaping. Since none of them now do that in Cheyenne, I conclude market demand has forced that change.

F. Minimum lot sizes: In particular after setbacks, these home essentially fill up almost all the buildable space on the lots. Laramie's zoning requires lot sizes that exceed the desired area for entry level homes. The Planned Unit Development provisions appear to allow smaller lots - but the fact is that multiple developers have explored that option, and due to the additional costs of the PUD process they appear to have always abandoned the idea (except for Richards Park which was done ? decades in the past?).

The Study did not pay any attention to the housing area that has become the default affordable housing alternative in the United States, namely "mobile homes", "travel trailers", "RVs", "smaller housing units than allowed by current code - i.e less than 500 sft".

Note Laramie mobile home development standards have the effect of preventing, or precluding any new mobile home parks. Those ordinances outlaw the installation of travel trailers or RVs - and for students that sort of housing can be a quite affordable option.

The older part of town, the tree area has a fair number of accessory housing units, or small homes or efficiency apartments - which seem to always stay occupied. So there is demand for those units. In particular, since I know personally of 5 non-conforming accessory units out of the R3 zoning district I must conclude the demand exceeds the distribution allowed by Laramie's code.

Condominium development seems to be slow in Laramie, and I think this is due to a perception by developers that they may have problems selling such units. I do not think any current code provisions affect this perspective. Every potential developer for such units in Laramie (and I suspect everywhere else) will complain about mandated parking provisions for such units, but in Laramie the land of drivers and cars I think the current City code provides about the proper count for required parking spaces.

Land or development costs are directly related to the width of new lots. Narrower lots will cost less to provide improvements for, and accordingly can sell for less. However, the current City limitations on percentage of unit frontage devoted to a garage directly forces lot widths to be wider, and lots to cost more.

In Cheyenne, where the market has played out on this matter, the last phases of a development on the east side of town forced units to be 30 ft wide as stand alone housing. This meant a builder had to have a 20' garage, then 10' house on the front. Effectively it caused the secondary bedrooms to be put into a 2nd floor. While those units have sold, I believe the relative slow rate of those sales is limiting the availability of such narrow stand alone lots in the future.

Also in Cheyenne, a developer who had previous success with large scale 4-plex and 2-plex developments attempted such a model just south of the interstate. There are and have been numerous issues pertaining to extension of utility lines to the property, which are not pertinent to this discussion. What is pertinent is the fact that at least a couple "demo" model 4-plex units were built. To that developer's surprise, and the builders' irritation, the units sold very slow. The appraisals, which dictate mortgage amounts and buyer limitations, came in lower than either party expected. At this time I think the large scale multi-unit development idea at this location (300+ lots) is on hold. This suggests there could be free market limitations on whether such developments are viable in Laramie.

Typical details pushed by developers or builders to "lower" costs for new housing are:

1. Narrowing road widths

2. Deleting sidewalks, and/or curb and gutter.

3. Deleting stormwater measures such as detention ponds.

4. Deleting minimum required hard surface parking spaces.

5. Waiving or not enforcing certain current code provisions such as residential sprinkler requirements, residential energy efficiency requirements, residential lateral load resistant framing details, minimum efficiency standards for

plumbing or HVAC items, fencing limitations, appearance limitations such as outlawing certain exposed screw steel siding types.

6. Provisions relating to "delayed improvements" or parks.

IT is my personal opinion that all of these items, if applied will reduce the desirability of new Laramie housing, and provide "windfall" profits to people who don't need it. I have not seen a single project that did not ultimately proceed despite such requirements. Road width - perhaps in Laramie is a little wider than needed for a viable town - but this is an item that needs to be considered carefully. I have been quite irritated by getting invited to a Richards Park social affair only to discover we needed to walk 3 blocks because of the severely limited on street parking due to the narrow roads.

Sincerely Yours,

James W Johnson, PE

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