

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

5

CHAPTER

Available and affordable housing are key factors in the attractiveness of a community to new residents and businesses. For existing residents, they are essential to quality of life, as is the presence of adequate, available housing to meet the needs of very low-, low-, moderate-, middle- and upper-income households. While market conditions will determine the quantity and price of new residential units, as well as resale and rental housing, it is sometimes necessary for public agencies and nonprofit organizations to take proactive steps to encourage housing construction or rehabilitation, to assist lower-income buyers or tenants to find adequate, affordable shelter in the community. These are all important considerations in the development and sustainability of quality living environments.

INTRODUCTION

Housing should be safe and decent. A cornerstone of the quality of life in Laramie, stem from housing and stretch well beyond the basic statistics pertaining to housing supply and family income. Housing conditions affect the integrity and livability of all neighborhoods in and around the City. In turn, the presence of sustainable, diverse, attractive, and vibrant neighborhoods becomes a compelling asset for retaining and attracting economic development.

The City of Laramie faces a challenge of having some of the highest cost housing and lowest incomes in the state. Two educational institutions, the University of Wyoming and Wyoming Technical Institute (WyoTech), bring significant contributions to the community in terms of resources and economic development; however, they also affect many residents by impacting neighborhood living conditions and influencing the local housing market.

As Laramie officials try to understand the local housing market, it continually changes as new development is approved and additional units are introduced to the housing stock. There has been a recent surge in housing construction during the last four years, and its reverberations throughout the market are not yet fully recognizable.

Beyond livability and economic development concerns, local government also has an interest in the sustainability of new residential construction and the condition of the

existing housing stock since market and assessed values directly impact the tax base and resulting revenue potential. Neighborhoods that are in need of revitalization and redevelopment should be the target of public and private investment and assistance efforts to preserve existing neighborhoods and prevent future decay and deterioration.

SUMMARY OF KEY HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

Laramie residents wish to enjoy the privileges of quality housing and the positive impact that well-designed neighborhoods can have on the image and attitude of the community. Issues voiced by citizens, organizations, and officials indicate that addressing housing needs and demands is a primary component to a successful future. Stakeholder input resulted in the assembly of seven key issues relative to housing in the planning area.

Quality, Affordable Housing

Construction of new homes is well underway in the Laramie area; however, many are not affordable to the majority of Laramie residents. Residents have expressed concerns that housing at a price below \$150,000 is neither available, nor being constructed.

While affordability is a relative term, it is an increasingly common issue for households at all levels of income. But, it is an issue that is dependent upon variables such as interest rates, the rate of unemployment, local standards and requirements, and national economic shifts that go beyond the desire of a builder to make a profit.

Neighborhood Revitalization

Established neighborhoods often lack the luster, size, design, and amenities of new housing. However, many communities are beginning to understand that, in return, older neighborhoods offer intangibles such as history, culture, proximity, and a stronger sense of community.

In Laramie, some older communities have been well maintained, while others require infill development, infrastructure improvements, and further revitalization efforts. While the impacts of history, neglect due to poverty, conversions to student-rental use, and inappropriate surrounding land uses may make recovery difficult for some neighborhoods, most offer an opportunity for renewal and long-term sustainability.

Appearance

Housing impacts neighborhood appearance and creates an impression. Housing that appears to need upkeep can be an indication of a community in a state of disrepair and decline. Freshly painted and well-maintained homes are indicative of a positive community with a promising future. Appearance is also correlated to community pride and ownership, perception, area property value, maintenance costs, and quality of life, where each of these factors can be influenced positively or negatively.

Comments by Laramie residents at public meetings indicated concerns about the appearance of the housing stock and area neighborhoods. Some suggested the need for stricter regulations or better enforcement of existing requirements. Others emphasized the need to improve basic cleanliness and property maintenance.

"We take stock of a city like we take stock of a man. The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge."

- Mark Twain

Efficient Growth

The manner in which an urban area grows impacts construction cost, maintenance cost, and ability to provide public amenities, access to services, transportation options, overall quality of life, and sense of community. The automobile has enabled people to live farther from the urbanized area – in suburbs and beyond into rural areas. While many argue that this has resulted in increased personal quality of life, it has come with significant individual and community expense.

Some (but not all) areas of newer development in the Laramie planning area can be characterized by the “leap frog” pattern that has become indicative of modern subdivision development. While sprawl has not been noted as a major concern, issues were raised that are symptomatic of sprawl. Examples include high housing cost, lack of accessible parks, lack of sidewalks and street lighting, inadequate collector streets, stresses on water and sewer infrastructure, lack of different housing types, and risks associated with surrounding, conflicting development.

Building New Neighborhoods

A distinct difference exists between subdivisions and neighborhoods. While one is focused upon the provision of quality housing and infrastructure, the other additionally focuses on the provision of an appealing, interconnected community. Good neighborhoods share a number of key traits, including a pedestrian-friendly environment, community focal points, access to services without the need to travel by car (although the option is certainly available), mixed housing that caters to different socioeconomic classes, distinguishable community character, narrow residential streets, and community-oriented architecture.

Several comments by Laramie residents indicate a desire to improve their quality of life through better neighborhood design, some of which has been initiated in the Turner Tract area of southeast Laramie. Such design corresponds to efficient growth and improved safety.

Life Cycle Housing

As time passes, household needs change. For example, a single person may get married, have children, and then watch those children leave the nest to begin life on their own. Each major shift in lifestyle may impact housing needs. A household with two children certainly requires more and different space than a home for mature adults whose children have grown and moved out of the home. Life-cycle housing anticipates the differing needs of households in transition by offering varied choices of housing within the same neighborhood. In this manner, a person can age in the same neighborhood or community without the need to move away to meet revised housing needs.

Urban or Rural Character

The Laramie planning area encompasses the City and a one-mile fringe area in the jurisdiction of Albany County. The area offers residents a broad mix of lifestyle opportunities—the chance to live within an urban area and enjoy the urban character or the chance to live in a more suburban or semi-rural setting. Housing and neighborhood

Case Study Example for Life Cycle Housing:

The Five City area of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, Waite Park and St. Joseph, MN have joined together to ensure that at least 15% of all new residential construction within each city will provide affordable housing for families. Through a Lifecycle Housing Units program A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) was signed, which is a formal voluntary commitment between the five cities that each will work with developers to target 15% of residential construction as affordable. Re-sale restrictions attached to the sales will allow the affordable homes to serve other homebuyers as the homes are recycled. Home standards for units that qualify include:

- ◆ 2 Bedrooms - While there may be some demand for smaller homes, it is not the purpose of the JPA to address this market.
- ◆ 1 Bathroom, with space for expansion, but to minimize cost, only one bath needs to be completed.
- ◆ Basic appliance package of refrigerator, stove/oven, and range hood.
- ◆ 2- Stall Garage
- ◆ Sodded front lawn

Source:
http://www.sartellmn.com/lifecycle_housing.htm

development generally reflect the surrounding character so that urban housing areas typically include sidewalks, street lights, curbs, and an underground storm drainage system. Rural housing areas typically have fewer, if any, of these amenities, including streets, sewer, water and parks.



Rural housing at the edge of Laramie contributes to sprawl.

New development that occurs in Albany County outside of the incorporated City poses a dilemma for those attempting to accommodate area character, but also prepare for future growth. New development may want to respect and take advantage of the surrounding rural character. At the same time, this area will only remain rural for a limited time before it becomes part of the urban fabric. Installation of appropriate urban features “up front” would mean less cost for “retrofitting” improvements in the future.

RELATED STUDIES AND REGULATIONS

Previously available plans and documents that took a more focused approach toward housing and neighborhood quality for the planning area were reviewed and considered in the development of this plan. Ordinances relevant to housing development and neighborhood protection were also considered. The relevant plans and ordinances included:

- ♦ **Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan.** In early 2001, the City received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to assist with the development of an in-depth analysis of housing conditions with recommendations for action. The two-year study involved a 24-member citizen Housing Review Group (HRG) that identified critical housing issues facing Laramie, obstacles facing improvement strategies, 38 policy statements, a series of specific action recommendations, and an implementation strategy. The report completed in 2003 addressed items such as:
 - Housing trends and forecasts.
 - Market conditions.
 - Assessment of buildable land for residential development.
 - Factors affecting residential location decisions.
 - Recommended housing policies and strategies for the next 20 years.
 - Government programs are available to assist in solving housing issues, particularly for low-income families.

Many observations and recommendations contained in this document are normally found in a comprehensive plan documents such as this. The study was so comprehensive and detailed that even a summary of its findings and proposals would occupy a significant part of this chapter. For this reason, this chapter will expand upon, not repeat, the initiatives of this significant study; emphasis will be on findings and recommendations related to local neighborhood conservation, land use, infrastructure, and development management.

A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federal entitlement program administered by HUD’s Community Planning and Development Office. The purpose of CDBG funds is to improve communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities—principally for persons with low and moderate incomes. Since the program began in 1974, more than \$55 billion has been appropriated.

Source:
www.senioraffordablehousing.org/development/glossary.htm

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

- ♦ **Subdivision Regulations.** The Subdivision Regulations govern the division of property and required public improvements, primarily for residential purposes within the planning area and 1 mile boundary area.
- ♦ **Zoning Ordinances.** Both the City of Laramie and Albany County have adopted zoning ordinances that regulate the uses, bulk, height, parking requirements, and other aspects of all development. Significant revisions to both the Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinance will follow this comprehensive planning effort.
- ♦ **Albany County Comprehensive Plan 2007.** Albany County is currently creating a new comprehensive plan. This plan should further delineate how Albany County will regulate and develop Albany County in the future.

CURRENT HOUSING OUTLOOK

Housing Costs

Laramie has some of the most expensive housing in the state, despite the relatively low incomes of its residents. The 2000 Census reported that the median house cost was \$116,400 higher than all comparable cities in the state and 120 percent of the state-wide median value. The median gross rent of \$465 was second highest among the comparable cities, exceeded only by the rent in Cheyenne (\$470). The median gross rent in Laramie was 106 percent of the state-wide median.

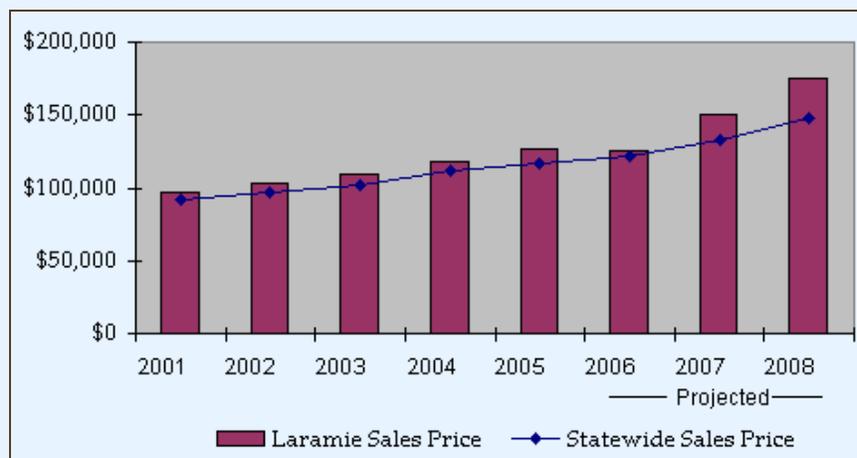
The Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) also tracks housing costs and reports that, over the past eight years, housing costs have increased significantly and have grown faster than state-wide averages. Between 1990 and 2000, according to the WCDA, the average sales price of existing detached, single-family houses increased from \$65,500 to \$118,437 an increase of 80.8 percent. WCDA further reports that between 2000 and 2004 average house costs increased to \$175,320 – an increase of 48 percent. The State-wide average increased 32 percent between 2000 and 2004, from \$111,437 to \$147,588.

Illustrated in *Figure 5.1, Average and Projected Sales Prices of Existing Homes*, is a graph that shows that the average Laramie sales price was slightly higher, but approximated the state-wide average until 2003, after which the Laramie cost increased significantly more than the state average.

Sales prices have increased considerably in 2004 and 2005 because there continues to be limited availability of housing choices for families to purchase. Laramie does not have many developers willing to take the risk that is involved in developing housing. Laramie typically has developers developing land, selling to builders and then builders selling to potential home owners. Another prohibiting factor is that there are limited opportunities

The Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) was created by state statute as a body corporate operating as an instrumentality of the state and receives no state funding. WCDA raises capital for the mortgages it provides by selling mortgage revenue bonds to investors. Since the interest paid to bond holders is generally exempt from federal income tax, investors accept a lower rate. The WCDA passes these savings on to homebuyers by providing mortgages at below-market interest rates. The homebuyers' mortgage payments repay the bonds.

Figure 5.1, Average and Projected Sales Prices of Existing Homes in Laramie & Across the State



Source: Wyoming Community Development Authority

Table 5.1, Annualized Percent Rent Increases in Albany County

Unit Type	Annualized Increase
Apartments	3.76%
Single-family Detached Houses	4.88%
Mobile Home with Lot	4.08%
Mobile Home	3.27%

Source: Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Divisions

to buy land for development purposes. In addition, these factors further contribute to the lack of developers willing to develop low income housing.

The strong demand for rental housing also results in single-family houses being removed from the ownership market and placed into the rental pool. Only 47.5 percent of the housing units in Laramie are owner-occupied despite the fact that 54.4 percent of the units are single-family detached houses.

The short supply of developers and sites for development, and the erosion of the single-family housing stock for rental purposes, drive up the cost of the housing that is available for purchase.

Rents have been increasing, as well, and are displayed in *Table 5.1, Annualized Percent Rent Increases*. The Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division, reports in the Wyoming Cost of Living Index that the average rent for apartments in Albany County increased from \$454 to \$594, or 31 percent between 2000 and 2004. During the same period, the average rent for houses increased 41 percent from \$603 to \$849, and mobile homes increased 10 percent. The Wyoming DOA reports the annualized increases in rents between 1986 and 2004 were substantial and outpaced the growth in incomes.

Affordability

Affordability is a constant issue of debate. For many, the question is, “Affordable to whom?” The household earning \$30,000 will define “affordable” quite differently from the household that earns \$120,000 a year. Nevertheless, each is looking for housing that is affordable. While a more in-depth discussion of housing affordability is presented in the *2003 Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan*, parts of that discussion are included here because it is such an important issue confronting the City.

A significant sector of Laramie’s population faces housing affordability issues, especially among the lower income residents. Families earning the median income historically have been able to afford housing if it were available, but the recent increases in housing costs have exceeded the affordable reach of these families. This increase has affected persons in all income brackets, resulting in residents purchasing smaller, less expensive homes that they would ordinarily buy to stay within their personal spending limits.

Housing affordability is generally defined in two ways. A widely used standard developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states that a family or household is able to afford to spend 30 percent of its income on housing. This percentage leaves a sufficient amount of income for other essential household needs. Households who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are described as “cost burdened.” The second affordability measure compares median incomes with median

housing costs and employs the standard that a household can afford to purchase a house priced at three times its annual income.

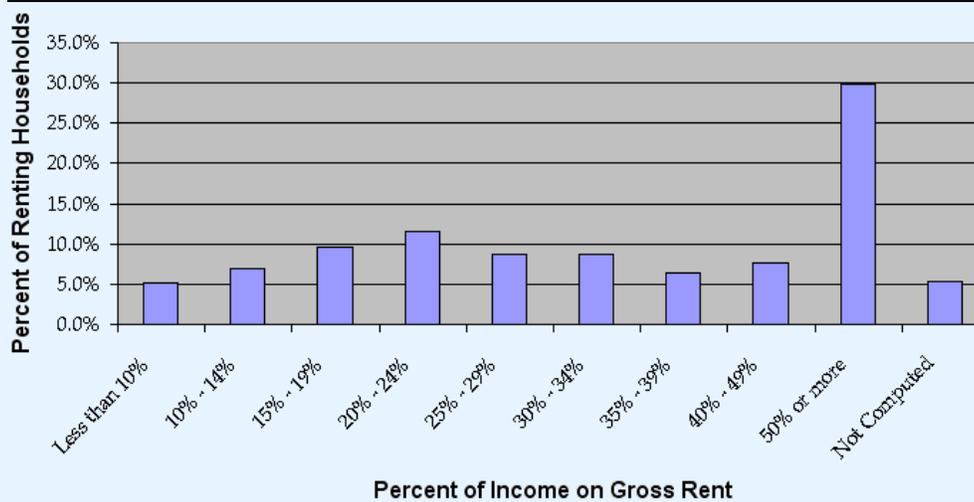
According to the 2000 Census, approximately 53 percent of renting households paid more than 30 percent of their income for rent, and over 30 percent of the households who rented paid more than 50 percent of their monthly income for rent (Figure 5.2, *Percentage of Income on Rental Housing*). The Laramie Area Tenant Survey conducted in 2001 also concluded

that over 50 percent of renters paid more than 30 percent of their income on housing. In terms of owner-occupied housing, the 2001 survey conducted by the Housing Review Group reported that 13.7 percent of owners expended more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

In the Laramie area, the median household income in 2000 was \$43,395. For housing to be considered affordable to a family earning the median household income, housing costs could not exceed \$1,085 in a month regardless of the type or terms of the mortgage. Based on this, a family earning 180 percent of the median could pay slightly more than \$1,950 per month and still consider housing costs to be affordable. On the other hand, families earning only 30 percent of the median household income can afford only \$326 in monthly housing-related expenses.

More significant than the actual ratios is the trend reflected in the data in *Table 5.2, Changes in Median Income and Housing Costs*. The median house value increased 80.8 percent during the 1990s while the median income increased 42.9 percent. More recent data show this trend continuing. The 2004 average sales price for single-family detached units reported by WCDA is 3.2 times the 2004 median family income reported by HUD. This ratio surpasses the affordable price for family households. This 2004 ratio compares an average sales price and a median income and should be considered an approximation. However, the average sales price reported by WCDA and the median sales prices reported by the Census in 2000 were very close. The average price that year was only

Figure 5.2, Percentage of Income on Rental Housing in Laramie



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Table 5.2, Changes in Median Income and Housing Costs in Laramie

	1990	2000	% Change
Median Non-family Income	\$19,642	\$27,318	39.10%
Median Family Income	\$30,340	\$43,349	42.90%
Median House Value	\$66,500	\$116,500	75.20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

\$2,000 higher than the median value.

While Laramie faces a range of housing needs, the issue of housing affordability for the low- and very low-income households may be the most severe. Significant portions of Laramie’s population are cost burdened and unable to afford housing. These populations spending more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing have inadequate amounts for other necessary expenses, such as health care and education. Families earning the median income have been able to afford housing in the past, but with the recent increases in housing cost, these families are now beginning to encounter affordability issues.

A number of additional factors impact housing affordability, including:

- ♦ **Student Housing.** As previously mentioned, the University of Wyoming and WyoTech contribute much to the economic success and quality of life in Laramie, but their student populations also impact the community by creating an “external demand” for housing. This additional demand for housing drives up prices, affecting the residents seeking housing in the rental and lower cost ownership markets.
- ♦ **High Costs of Construction or Renovation.** Housing price is largely based upon the cost of labor and materials necessary to construct or renovate a housing unit. People are seeking larger homes that require more space, more time to build, and more materials. The price of materials and labor also impacts cost. If lumber prices increase, the cost is passed on to the potential buyer. Likewise, the cost of housing increases as the number of amenities increases. Units that once included only two bedrooms are now expected to include three or four bedrooms and at least one additional bathroom. Garage size has increased to accommodate two (or even more) vehicles instead of one.
- ♦ **Shortage of Home Builders and Developers.** Shortages of contractors, developers, and building trade persons limits the supply of new home construction and remodeling resources, thereby driving up prices. Further, it generally reduces the breadth of housing type choices as contractors often specialize in a narrow range of products. A common complaint in many smaller cities such as Laramie is that the lack of competition among builders has allowed them to “corner the market” and provides no incentive for financial risk taking or product design creativity.
- ♦ **Market Conditions.** Standard procedure for home builders is to construct homes in a price range that can optimize per-unit margins and the volume of homes that can be sold. Housing units can be built for more or less than this “comfort range,” but the builder increases risks. For instance, if a home builder chooses to construct custom homes for high-income residents, the profit margin will increase, but the number of units requested will decrease. (Additionally, if the economy sours, high-end housing is generally the first to slow.) On the other hand, housing constructed below the optimum market provides reduced profit and does not always guarantee a high volume as compensation. Thus, the builder that chooses to construct housing below the balance will likely earn less profit without added incentives.
- ♦ **Availability of Land.** Realtors and real estate investors often say that the value of land is primarily based upon three items; location, location, and location. The same applies in consideration of housing affordability. Land in some areas will be more cost prohibitive than in other areas. For example, land in urban areas tends to be more expensive than land in rural areas. Land in declining areas may be cheaper to acquire, but costly to assemble and harder to sell. Many newer subdivisions are constructed

beyond the edge of a city because the purchase cost of land is cheaper. A portion of that reduction in cost is generally passed on to the buyer. On the other hand, a common complaint of residents that live outside the urban area is lack of amenities within walking distance such as parks, open space, community facilities, day care facilities, or schools. Once additional land is acquired to provide for these elements, the costs of development may well meet or exceed the cost associated with urban development.

A related factor affecting land costs, one often cited by developers themselves, is that the minimum lot size restrictions found in zoning ordinances increases the cost of land. Land affordability is further hampered by “excessive” land development standards and improvements prescribed by subdivision regulations. These factors are addressed later in this chapter.

- ♦ **Financing.** Development of housing requires significant investment. Like most investment ventures, capital is most accessible when the product proposed follows conventional market practices. Because affordable housing projects have a tendency to provide less profit and fewer margins for error, they are sometimes considered to be “risky” by lenders. While this may not keep a project from being funded, it may result in increased rates of interest, shorter loan life, or added requirements. In each case, the cost is passed on to the buyer.
- ♦ **Incentives.** Market forces can often add to the cost of housing. For instance, an increase in interest rates affects the amount individuals can afford, which may result in builders increases their unit prices or, alternatively, having to adjust their housing product to accommodate the change. In these cases, government and nonprofit organizations can introduce incentives that make development of affordable housing a more viable option. Incentives come in a number of forms and are truly limited only by regulation and innovation of local organizations. Typical incentives can include acquisition and assembly of land, streamlined development review processes, reduced fee or bond requirements, provision of infrastructure, “buy-down” programs that utilize local funds to cover an amount of construction costs, loan guarantee, rental assistance, and down-payment assistance for home buyers.
- ♦ **Community Amenities.** As previously discussed, housing demands today are substantially different than in past decades. Residents have come to realize that amenities play a very large role in the quality of life they can expect to experience in a community. Parks, recreation areas, open spaces, community centers, swimming pools, tennis courts, and connecting sidewalks are features that should be common. Each of these, plus other amenities comes with a price tag and diminishes affordability. Ironically, individuals that live in manufactured housing communities, apartment complexes, and other types of affordable housing tend to have fewer amenities, but these are the areas with the most need.
- ♦ **Building Codes.** Building regulations are designed to increase safety or ensure that other objectives of the community are met. However, added regulation often equates to added cost of construction, either through direct costs or delays (“time is money”). Building Codes and regulations should be developed to allow for flexibility, which in turn may reduce costs or allow for alternative design.

An example of a “buy-down” program may be the use of local funds to lower the interest rate on a construction loan. This term may be used generally to refer to any such instrument that lessens the amount of risk due to a developer of less-than-market-value housing, also known as affordable housing.

- ♦ **Fees and Dues.** Fees are commonplace in housing. Utility service generally requires a service fee. Financial institutions often add processing fees to the mortgage preparation process. Homeowners' associations assess dues to cover expenses of managing the neighborhood. While many of these fees are fairly minimal compared to other housing costs, each detracts from affordability.



Some of the University housing is reaching or has reached its useful life, which offers an opportunity for reuse and redevelopment.

Housing Conditions

Much of Laramie's housing stock is old and in need of maintenance or rehabilitation. Typically, housing needs significant repairs after 20 years; over 7,075 units in the City are older than 26 years. The late 1970s saw a significant expansion of the residential housing stock with 1,278 units constructed. Multi-family units totaled 46 percent of the new units at that time and have provided a substantial portion of the rental pool over the recent decades. In addition to the age of the units, many of them served as student housing, which typically increases the need for repairs and maintenance.

Until the recent expansion of the multi-family supply, owners of rental property had a steady pool of student renters and did not have to upgrade their units to successfully rent them. The construction of new multi-family housing will change this dynamic and will likely require an upgrade of the older units in order for them to remain competitive.

The University of Wyoming faces similar issues with an aging housing stock. Many of the University's units were built 40 years ago and suffer from deferred maintenance, as well.

According to participants in the planning process, there are units being occupied that are in very poor condition. As the community's housing stock ages and with the continued reliance on rental housing to serve the low-income residents, some form of enforcement mechanism may be warranted to upgrade and maintain the quality of the housing stock.

Compounding this troubling situation in the City are the unsightly housing conditions found at the southern edges of the planning area, in Albany County south of the Fairgrounds. The high incidence of occupied substandard mobile homes, dilapidated dwellings, and makeshift structures is made worse by the presence of unpaved (i.e., earthen) streets, abandoned vehicles, nearby conflicting land uses, junk storage, and the frequent presence of farm animals. The City and County need to work together to address this difficult situation.

The City of Laramie and other organizations should look into funding sources that can aid in improving the conditions of existing housing. The Wyoming Housing Network is a new state-wide nonprofit corporation created in 2004 to promote the rehabilitation of housing

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

around the state. This agency receives funds from the Federal HOME Partnership Program that are passed through WCDA and used to establish ongoing, low interest loan programs for housing rehabilitation. Interest on the loans range from one to five percent, depending on the incomes of the occupants; in some instances, the interest could be deferred. Funds received from the loan repayments stay in the same community to fund subsequent loans. This program can even be adapted to work with absentee landlords. Funding such as this can make updates and improvements affordable for all income levels.

Changing Demand for Housing

Laramie’s population has grown slowly over recent years, but the demand for housing has grown more rapidly due to the shift from family to non-family households. This trend has significant impacts on the future demand for housing as non-family households are both smaller and have lower incomes.

As noted in *Table 5.3, Population in Living Units*, the number of persons living in family households decreased between 1990 and 2000 from 16,868 to 15,896 – a 5.76 percent decrease. By contrast, the number of persons living in non-family households increased by 25.35 percent from 6,845 to 8,580. The number of persons living in University dormitories decreased by over 13 percent from 2,481 to 2,157; the dormitory population has further decreased to 1,900 in 2005.

Table 5.3, Population in Living Units, Laramie

	1990	2000	% Change
Population in Family Households	16,868	15,896	-5.76%
Population in Non-family Households	6,845	8,580	25.36%
Population in University Dorms	2,243	1,875	-16.40%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. UW Dorm data provided by the University of Wyoming.

Between 1990 and 2000, Laramie’s population grew 1.9 percent; however, due to the decreasing household size and the shift from families to non-family households, the actual number of households grew 9 percent (see *Table 5.4, Changes in Households and Housing Units*). In 1980, the average household

Table 5.4, Changes in Households and Housing Units in Laramie

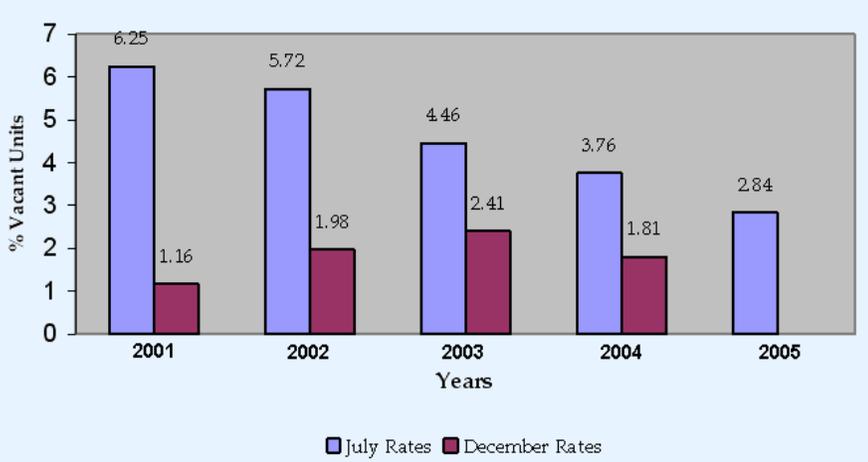
	1990	2000	% Change
Total Households	10,400	11,336	9%
Total Housing Units	11,076	11,994	8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

size was 2.78 persons per household. This average decreased to 2.31 persons per household in 1990 and to 2.19 persons per household in 2000. This decrease is important because it increases the demand for housing beyond the increase in population. This trend is occurring nation-wide as people wait longer to marry, have fewer children, and more frequently live in non-traditional family living units. To keep pace, the housing stock grew by 8 percent.

Vacancy rates also reflect the shift to smaller, non-family households as the vacancy rates have steadily declined along with the declining household size. The WCDA collects data on vacancy rates for rental properties in July and December of each year. Shown in *Figure 5.3, Albany County Vacancy Rates*, is the seasonality of vacancy rates in Albany County over the past five years as the student population fills units during the school year, but vacates them for the summer. However, the declining household size has resulted in a tightening of the housing market as the summer vacancy rates have dropped below 3 percent.

Figure 5.3, Albany County Vacancy Rates



source: Wyoming Community Development Authority

As indicated in *Figure 5.3, Albany County Vacancy Rates*, December vacancy rates rose slightly in 2002 and 2003, but declined again in 2004 to 1.81 percent. July vacancy rates have been declining steadily since 2001, from a rate of 6.25 to 2.84 in 2005. This data have not yet begun to reflect the recent expansion in residential units that has seen 833 new units permitted for construction in 2004 and 2005, which will be reflected in later reports of the WCDA.

A vacancy rate of five percent is considered the minimum desirable rate to allow sufficient mobility within the market. The vacancy rates during the school year have been significantly below this standard; the July rates have declined below this standard, as well, indicating a shortage of housing supply.

Table 5.5, Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Laramie

	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Total
2000 Census	6,164	2,231	11,336
2000	46	4	50
2001	59	149	208
2002	81	10	94
2003	115	78	193
2004	130	194	324
2005	109	402	511
2006	77	145	222
Total permitted	617	982	1,602

Source: 2000 U.S. Census; Laramie Building Department

Recent Construction

As displayed in *Table 5.5, Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits*, the Laramie housing market is responding to several years of an extreme shortage of rental units. In the last five years, there has been a significant increase in multi-family units; 833 units have been permitted by the City since 2001 – a 37 percent increase in the

number of multi-family units that were reported in the 2000 Census. The number of single-family units permitted since 2000 totals 540, which represents an 8.7 percent increase in the single-family housing stock. The total number of housing units permitted since 2000 is 1,380, a 12 percent increase in housing units in six years. This percentage increase compares to a nine percent increase for the entire decade of the 1990s. Not since 1976 to 1979, when 1,278 units were added, has Laramie seen a comparable amount of residential construction.

These recent increases in housing supply will create positive impacts on several issues. There will be relief in the extremely low vacancy rate, and owners of the older units will likely need to upgrade them to remain competitive in the rental market. The additional supply also should slow the increases in rents.

Development Review, Permitting Process and Zoning Regulations

Several agency representatives and citizens spoke about the lack of coordination among reviewing agencies, the length of time necessary for standard plans to be reviewed, and the lack of a system in which everyone knows the rules and procedures. Some comments suggested that many costly requirements were added to approvals that made the project infeasible or less desirable for the developer.

Although improvements are occurring, the zoning ordinance does not prescribe a review process that establishes a clear sequence of steps to review a development application. A clear and consistent review process that identifies the required information for an application, the sequence of steps in a review process, and time deadlines for performing reviews would add predictability to the approval and permitting process and aid developers seeking approval of affordable housing projects.

The City’s zoning ordinance contains six residential zoning districts, but only the R3, Multiple Family district provides a high enough density to produce affordable housing, as shown in *Table 5.6, Summary of Zoning Districts*. Furthermore, the “pyramid” form of the City’s ordinance allows single-family units in all districts. Thus, low-density development frequently is constructed on land zoned for higher density, multi-family units, displacing opportunities for more affordable housing.

Table 5.6, Summary of Zoning Densities in Laramie

District	Use	Minimum Lot Area (sq. ft)	Density (DUs per gross acre)
LR	SF	9,000	5
R1	SF	7,000	6
RR	SF, MH	16,000	3
R2	MF 4du	6,000/bldg. 3,500/DU	12
R2	w/ MH	4,800/bldg. 3,500/DU	12
R3	SF, MF	6,000/bldg. 1,000/DU	44

Source: Laramie Zoning Ordinance

Several commercial zoning districts (B1, Limited Business; B2, Business; and C2, Commercial) allow a Planned Unit Development (PUD) in which density is allowed to be increased to 44 dwellings per gross acre in return for the provision of affordable housing. The affordable housing required for the density bonus must be priced for households with incomes that are 80 percent or less of the Albany County median income. However, there are no provisions that ensure that the lower-cost housing will remain affordable over time, especially after the resale of the property. Also, this development option is seldom used due to the difficulty of gaining approval of the higher density and the length of time spent in the approval process.

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU), a possible housing type that can be affordable, is allowed only for housing of employees working on the site of the accessory unit. Beyond this limited allowance for ADUs, the zoning ordinance is not explicit about the allowance of mixed-use buildings. An emerging trend in cities is to permit a second small residence to be constructed on an existing single-family residential lot. Under certain circumstances, these units (often referred to as “granny flats”) provide low-cost housing opportunities for family members that are elderly or have other special needs in a time where average life spans are rapidly increasing.

Buildings with commercial or offices on lower levels and residential units on upper levels can provide affordable housing opportunities. Older buildings in Downtown provide opportunities for mixed-use development and can be a source of housing. The City has removed the residential parking requirement, which had been an obstacle to providing housing in the Downtown area. Code should be developed to aid downtown building owners the ability to develop properties for residential use.

The zoning ordinance also requires an existing vacant lot to be 4,000 square feet in area and at least 40 feet wide to be built upon, a rather generous standard. Unsubdivided tracts of land can be developed, provided each building is supported by 14,000 square feet of land and the tract is at least 120 feet wide. These requirements prevent any substantial density without first subdividing the property into lots. These restrictions, arguably, prevent creative infill opportunities that can provide affordable housing.

Other examples of obstacles or avoidable costs that could be changed with a subdivision code rewrite include street standards that may over-design street widths in residential areas and the inability to develop mixed-use buildings. Incentives can also be provided that included include shared parking for residential units and on-site commercial uses, exemption of floor area devoted to affordable housing from the maximum floor area limitations, density bonuses and reduced, waived or deferred fees.

Just because incentives are offered this does not mean affordable housing will become available. Inclusionary zoning and housing can apply to subdivisions and multi-family projects as well as applicable zones, which can set aside lots for affordable housing. In addition to creating affordable housing, another advantage to inclusionary zoning and housing is the dispersal of affordable units throughout the community.

A revamping of the zoning ordinance to preserve higher density residential zones for multi-family housing will preserve opportunities for affordable housing. A systematic review of the zoning ordinance for the purpose of removing impediments to affordable housing is needed.

Future Housing Advocacy

While housing issues are critical to Laramie's future, there is currently no permanent local organization or entity to work toward housing solutions. Many state and federal programs and resources are available to assist with housing issues, but results come slowly and a sustained effort is necessary to make headway in addressing



Downtown second-story apartments.

The Section 8 program is designed to increase the housing choices available to very low-income households by making privately-owned rental housing affordable to them. It provides rent subsidies, either rental certificates or vouchers, on behalf of eligible tenants. These subsidies usually equal the difference between 30 percent of the household's adjusted income and the HUD-approved fair market rent (for certificates) or the PHA-approved payment standard (for vouchers).

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

these difficult problems. An individual, board or group should be in a leadership position to advocate for housing. The ability to create and maintain needed organizational and staff resources is hampered by Laramie's non-metropolitan status, which limits the availability of Federal funds.

The Cheyenne Housing Authority (CHA) currently administers public housing and rental assistance programs in Laramie, and discussions have addressed the need for a Laramie housing authority several times. Furthermore, CHA provides access to Section 8 rental assistance funds. Much work yet remains, however, for a single organization to handle. The need for a new local housing organization with paid staff is further described in the *2003 Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan*. Until this occurs, CHA should be retained in order to keep a needed partner and to not overburden newly attempted local efforts with the immediate responsibilities of administering on-going programs. The focus should be on adding resources, rather than replacing them in the near-term.

Several funding sources are available to local residents for grants and loans, each with different and complex application processes and criteria. Many local citizens can benefit from available programs, but lack the experience or time to navigate complicated application procedures. A housing organization can provide needed technical assistance to citizens seeking the available resources. Educational information and outreach can also increase accessibility to existing resources for local residents.

Opportunities exist such as the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and New Directions program. The COPC program can provide start-up services to a nonprofit to build community capacity to address issues of housing affordability and rehabilitation. This program also can provide outreach to help residents' access existing housing resources that are available through a variety of State and Federal housing programs, as well as labor force development and training for economic development purposes. Since 1994, HUD has awarded grants to help colleges and universities establish and operate Community Outreach Partnership Centers to implement outreach and applied research activities that will address community problems and issues. The program also seeks to encourage structural changes, both within a university and in the way the institution relates to its neighborhood. New COPC grants are awarded to applicants who have never received a COPC grant and can be used to address distinct community problems, including affordable housing. New Directions grants are awarded to applicants who have previously received a COPC grant and can be used to implement new eligible activities in a current COPC community.

Another opportunity available to Laramie residents is the Laramie Main Street Low Interest Revolving Loan. This loan, which is provided to Laramie residents wishing to remodel or build residential units in the downtown district, is provided through the Wyoming Main Street Program. This loan can make a remodel or development in the downtown a more feasible option.

A housing organization also can pursue public and private funding sources and coordinate with existing housing agencies and organizations in the state. The role of an ombudsman to assist affordable housing projects through the review and permitting process is also a potential role. A permanent housing organization, with full-time staffing, is needed as a



Laramie offers a variety of attractive neighborhood environments in a variety of settings.

long-term solution to develop and then sustain a focus on local housing needs and coordinate the various programs and resources available.

CURRENT NEIGHBORHOOD OUTLOOK

Characteristics that make Laramie a unique community include the neighborhoods that make up the City. Laramie is comprised of a series of distinct, unique neighborhoods – from the tree area, to West Laramie, to Indian Hills, Alta Vista, and Sherman Hills. Each of these neighborhoods has a unique character. When taken in total, they are the foundation of a great community.

Although there is no formal neighborhood structure, each of the neighborhoods varies greatly. They differ in the era in which they were

developed, the architectural style of the housing, density, and neighborhood character. For example, the neighborhood south of the campus known as the tree area is characterized by an old housing stock, with many distinct homes. The old, large cottonwood trees are a significant factor in determining the character of this neighborhood. On the other hand, the neighborhoods of Indian Hills and Alta Vista are characterized by single-family, detached housing on large lots with less mature landscaping.

Physical Threats to Neighborhood Character

Many of these neighborhoods, particularly the older ones, are under threat. Their integrity and attractiveness are being influenced by many of the destructive housing trends described earlier in this chapter. As the quality of even a small number of dwellings deteriorates, so goes the neighborhood. Physical factors contributing to neighborhood blight include:

- ♦ High incidences of single-family rental units occupied by students, each owning one or more motor vehicles.
- ♦ High levels of on-street parking in residential areas at all hours of the day. This problem is deemed by many jurisdictions to be so disruptive to a neighborhood that they ban 24-hour on-street parking.
- ♦ Excessively wide streets, conducive to vehicle storage, but incompatible with the proportions of lots, sidewalks, parkways, and tree canopies. This condition creates the illusion of an unsafe situation, particularly when sidewalks are located



Large, new dwellings located in an existing neighborhood of older, smaller structures can have a significant effect on neighborhood character.

directly adjacent to curbs.

- ♦ Storage of commercial vehicles, RVs, utility trailers, and boats on residential streets.
- ♦ Parking of vehicles in the front yard on unpaved surfaces.
- ♦ Excessive speed by drivers on residential streets.
- ♦ Unkempt yards and uncontrolled weeds.
- ♦ Keeping of livestock.
- ♦ Inordinate number of vacant lots, creating gaps between residences.
- ♦ Designated zoning more intense than the built out neighborhood.

Many of these challenges can be addressed through adoption and enforcement of regulations directed toward maintaining neighborhoods and early prevention of blighting influences.



There are attractive alternatives for street closure in the interest of CPTED design principles, while also acting to calm traffic.

Appropriately Sized Residences

Since the construction of “tract homes” in the 1940s and early 1950s, the average size of the American house has steadily increased. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the typical home of previous generations is no longer regarded as adequate for many affluent families. Yet, many residents wish to remain in one of Laramie’s more attractive and valuable urban neighborhoods. An obvious solution, assuming that funds are available, is for the owner to build an addition to the existing structure. Another solution is to build a new home on a nearby vacant lot. In fully built-out neighborhoods, the final option is to entirely replace the structure (“teardowns”).

It is important that new infill or teardown structures and additions to existing dwellings be designed to fit in with other homes in the neighborhood. Once a neighborhood is identified as being at risk for significant upgrading, the first objective should be to work out reasonable expansion plans that will permit modernization and reasonable enlargement without destroying neighborhood character.

Ideally, zoning regulations should allow normal upgrading of neighborhoods to retain its attractiveness without permitting the too-big house, which turns the neighborhood over to another economic class. Later sections of this Comprehensive Plan will include a careful examination of zoning requirements for setbacks, building coverage, floor area ratios, height, and landscaping requirements to promote the blending-in of neighborhood improvements with nearby dwellings.

Creating a Sense of Security

The physical design of neighborhoods, including their layout and orientation of structures, can affect the levels of crime and fear in neighborhoods. Researchers have identified basic design principles that reduce fear and prevent crime in neighborhood communities. The basic principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) include natural surveillance, natural access control, and territorial/defensible spaces.

Case Study Example:

The City of Boston created a “Fast Track” program designed to assist people who wish to build new housing with the permitting process. It is comprised of zoning clinics and seminars specifically designed to educate applicants on the permitting process. Features of the program include:

- 1) Residential color coded permits - Created to track the progress of the application throughout the various stages of the permitting process. Plan examiners identify the color-coded applications as a priority. The examiners immediately contact the developers if additional information is required. This significantly reduces the turnaround time when additional information is needed.
- 2) Caseworkers - Caseworkers are assigned to facilitate the review process. Caseworkers communicate with the developers, the Department of Inspectional Services, and various agencies in order to expedite the process.
- 3) Expedited Design Review - This expedites the process as a majority of design work is reviewed before the Board of Appeals reaches a final decision on the zoning issue.

- ♦ **Natural Surveillance.** Humans feel safer in places where they can see what is going on around them. Law-abiding citizens also feel safer in settings where they are visible to other law-abiding people who they believe would help in situations of danger. Perpetrators of crime, in contrast, prefer settings that are not visible to law-abiding people who might assist their victims. Therefore, the more the physical environment of a neighborhood enables people to survey their surroundings and to be visible to other people, the safer a neighborhood will feel and be. A few examples of design features that promote natural surveillance include:
 - Good lighting of streets, alleys, and parking areas;
 - Landscaping that does not provide hiding places for perpetrators. Hedges and shrubs should be no higher than three feet and tree canopies no lower than eight feet;
 - See-through types of fences;
 - Windows that look out on streets and alleys, particularly bay windows; and
 - Non-recessed doorways.
- ♦ **Natural Access Control.** Perpetrators desire settings that allow them to enter and exit without being noticed. They do not prefer places with limited points of entry and exit; multiple access points allow more options for escape following a crime. Therefore, by limiting the number of entrances and exits to a community, it reduces the attractiveness of the neighborhood as a place for crime. Many communities that are planned on the grid system are beginning to close streets to limit access to their community and create identifiable neighborhood boundaries and points of entrance and exit. Contemporary neighborhoods that are planned with a curvilinear street system have generally applied this principle in the subdivision layout and design.
- ♦ **Territoriality/Defensible Spaces.** A basic principle of CPTED is for citizens to show that they own their territory, which helps to deter crime in a neighborhood. A neighborhood that portrays a strong physical image is less likely to attract perpetrators than those that appear less defensible. Subdivision perimeter fencing commonly used in contemporary subdivision design and master planned communities is a method utilized to establish identifiable boundaries. Also, simple property enhancements such as flowers in planters on balconies and in business districts, vegetable and flower gardens, seasonal decorations, and outdoor holiday displays contribute to the portrayal of strong community images, which symbolize a sense of togetherness as a community. These design principles help to minimize crime incidents in neighborhoods. Many communities throughout the United States have incorporated the CPTED design principles into their zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, design standards, and neighborhood planning programs. Generally, the incidence of crime in neighborhoods can be significantly reduced through development and implementation of environmental design principles. Laramie may want to consider utilization of these techniques in a neighborhood planning program or consider their incorporation in neighborhood development standards.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS AND ACTION STATEMENTS

In this section the goals and action statements for each element of the plan are set forth. The goals and action statements are to be used as a starting point to achieve the overall vision of this plan.

Housing Goals and Action Statements

1. Improve and maintain the quality of the existing housing stock.
2. Provide adequate sites, through zoning and infrastructure improvements, to meet projected housing demand.
3. Establish a local housing organization to advocate and pursue sustained efforts for affordable housing solutions.
4. Conduct a systematic review of the City’s ordinances and review procedures to remove unnecessary constraints.
 - a) The City zoning and subdivision ordinances should be rewritten to identify and remove/modify requirements that impede or add avoidable costs to all housing projects. Concurrently with removing obstacles, the review should seek to add incentives designed to promote affordable housing.
 - b) Revise the zoning code to allow existing lots of less than 4,000 square feet to be developed (in neighborhoods that are not experiencing on-street parking problems) and to review the desirability of allowing unsubdivided tracts to be developed more intensely.
 - c) Search for sources of funding to help with code revisions to aid affordable housing. The WCDA has a grant program to fund the review and amendment of ordinances for the purpose of promoting affordable housing. The Wyoming Business Council also provides grants to review and amend local ordinances to promote both housing and economic development.
 - d) Incorporate into the zoning ordinance a housing palette that establishes the dimensional criteria for a wide variety of housing types, including single-family detached and attached units, lot-line and village houses, twin houses and duplexes, patio and atrium houses, townhouses, duplex townhouses, multiplexes and apartments, and manufactured homes to prevent a single type from consuming a disproportionate amount of land. The housing types would be allowed by right in planned residential developments subject to the provisions of the palette, which controls density, setbacks, height, and bulk. See *Chapter 3, Community Character* and the current Turner Tract Area plan which is a good example of multiple housing types and sizes within a cohesive development.
 - e) Create incentives that promote new concepts that achieve different housing stock at different affordability levels. This including mixed use developments, industrial and commercial housing construction.
 - f) Develop regulations aimed at improving and maintaining the quality of the existing housing stock.
 - g) Reduce street pavement width standards for new residential areas. When existing residential streets eventually require reconstruction, implement a redesigned narrower cross section (*Chapter 7, Transportation*).
5. Streamline the application review process to avoid undue impediment to affordable housing projects.

Community Outreach Partnerships Centers (COPC) grants help colleges and universities apply their human, intellectual, and institutional resources to the challenge of revitalizing distressed communities. COPC grants must be used in urban areas. Each COPC grantee addresses at least three of the following issues in the targeted community: local housing, infrastructure, economic development, neighborhood revitalization, health care, crime, or planning. Grantees contribute to resolving issues like urban problems, coordinating outreach efforts with neighborhood groups and residents, acting as a local information exchange, galvanizing support for neighborhood revitalization, developing public service projects and instructional programs, and collaborating with other partnership centers. Examples of COPC’s include: 1) Job training and counseling to reduce unemployment. 2) Resident-backed strategies to spur economic growth and reduce crime. 3) Local initiative to combat housing discrimination and homelessness. 4) Mentoring programs for neighborhood youth. 5) Financial and technical assistance for new businesses.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) is the largest Federal block grant to State and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. The program provides grants to States and localities that communities use, often in partnership with local nonprofit groups, to fund a wide range of activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds may be used development activities including, but not limited to:

- 1) acquisition of property for public purposes;
- 2) construction or reconstruction of streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works;
- 3) demolition;
- 4) rehabilitation of public and private buildings;
- 5) public services;
- 6) planning activities;
- 7) assistance to nonprofit entities for community development activities; and,
- 8) assistance to private, for profit entities to carry out economic development activities (including assistance to micro-enterprises).

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

- a) Amend the zoning and subdivision ordinance provisions to provide clear and predictable administrative review procedures that, at a minimum, define the specific materials to be submitted in applications, define the sequential steps in the review of applications, assign responsibilities for City agencies, Planning Commission and City Council, and establish time lines for completing the review at each step of the process.
- b) Consider establishing a rapid review committee consisting of the relevant local staff, called a Green Light Committee, which can provide an expedited review of affordable housing projects, as well as critical economic development projects, when time/costs are crucial to the project. Criteria must be established to determine which projects qualify and which do not.
- c) Establish administrative departmental policies that assign a project manager for each application to be reviewed and define the responsibility and authority of the staff involved in the review.
 - i. Implement the goals and recommendations noted in the 2001 Housing Study and Action Plan.
 - ii. Create a local housing organization to work as a “permanent housing advocate” and provide adequate resources to address housing issues.
- a) Establish a private, nonprofit 501c3 corporation or form a partnership with the Wyoming Housing Network, which is an existing State-wide nonprofit corporation, to address housing issues.
- b) Establish and sustain partnerships among the University, WyoTech, LCCC, City, County, nonprofit agencies, developers, and State and Federal agencies.
- c) Develop a working relationship with the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation to access funding for operating assistance and for training of board members and community leaders of a local housing entity.
- d) Work with the University to seek HUD funding under the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and New Directions program to help launch a housing advocacy nonprofit corporation.
- e) In addition to the HUD program, the WCDA has funding for the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) that can provide funds for operating costs and capacity building. CHDOs can apply annually for these funds prior to September 1 of each year. WCDA also provides funds to CHDOs for project specific technical assistance.
 - i. Establish an ongoing housing rehabilitation and maintenance program.
- a) Identify sources of funding to help improve the quality of housing stock in Laramie. Groups such as The Wyoming Housing Network which receives funds from the Federal HOME Partnership Program that are passed through WCDA promote the rehabilitation of housing around the state.
- b) Pursue funds from the HUD Community Development Block Grant program to upgrade streets and infrastructure in targeted, low-income neighborhoods. These

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

funds also can be used to finance rehabilitation of housing units throughout a neighborhood, provided the residents of the targeted neighborhood meet low-income criteria.

- c) Assist owners of affordable rental properties and low-income homeowners in maintaining and improving residential properties through a variety of housing rehabilitation assistance programs.
 - d) Develop and enforce minimum housing standards and maintenance codes so housing can be affordably maintained. The standards should be flexible to allow for “as safe as” or “equal to” conditions when affordable housing development or rehabilitation is involved.
6. Establish an inclusionary housing program. An inclusionary housing program is a mandatory requirement placed on future housing developments and subdivisions and has been shown to be one of the most effective approaches to creating affordable housing without direct government financial subsidies.
 7. Promote residential growth in the downtown through regulation flexibility and the use of the Laramie Main Street Low Interest Revolving Loan. This loan can be used for residential dwelling units located in the downtown district.
 8. Establish inclusionary zoning that requires a certain percentage of the built units or subdivided lots to be set aside for affordable housing.
 9. Provide density bonuses to offset the affordable housing requirement to avoid significantly affecting the feasibility of the residential development. The risk to do this should be reduced as much as possible to promote this concept.
 10. Support the WCDA proposal to the Wyoming Legislature to promote work force housing. WCDA is proposing a work force housing program to the State Legislature that would provide infrastructure funding to developers of residential subdivisions in return for a certain amount of the housing in the new subdivision being affordable to the local work force. This program, if authorized, could help upgrade or install new infrastructure to critical housing locations.
 11. Coordinate housing issues with economic development issues by working with Laramie Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) to identify the profile of workers in the targeted industries in order to provide appropriate housing choices.
 12. Work with local lenders to form a pool of available loan funds to help finance affordable housing projects and to assist first time home buyers. Any ways to reduce costs related to loans should be examined.
 13. Promote the construction of new housing units in all price ranges in all areas of the city.
 14. Develop an inventory of undeveloped and underdeveloped sites that provide desirable housing locations with practical levels of residential density. Include in the inventory sites that are most suitable for special needs housing due to their proximity to services typically needed by the elderly, disabled, and other citizens of special needs. These sites may include those adjacent to Downtown, possibly within one of the two candidate redevelopment areas (*Chapter 3, Community Character*).

15. Promote the use and development of high-standard, manufactured housing and modular housing sites and parks in selected areas of the City and surrounding planning area developed with site design standards similar in nature to regular subdivision standards.
16. Coordinate with Albany County officials to provide uniform development standards for all types of housing stock.



Contemporary modular housing units may be compatible with adjacent and nearby single family homes, subject to quality development standards.

17. Develop site design standards for manufactured housing communities that are similar in nature to subdivision requirements, including street and sidewalk requirements, setbacks, lot configuration, minimum yards, landscaping, parking, and other variables.
18. Develop partnerships with local academic institutions to jointly address student housing issues.
19. Consider and develop housing for the special needs population. Inclusion of units for the handicapped or elderly, in all new construction should be considered.

20. Devote grant-writing personnel to seek financial support to nonprofit organizations assisting lower- and moderate-income families, seniors, disabled, and other residents in finding affordable housing through home sharing and other activities, as appropriate.
21. Encourage development of energy efficient housing or LEED certified housing in the community. Similar methods of “fast tracking” done for affordable housing should be considered for energy efficient housing.
22. Pursue the development of a homeless shelter and transitional housing.
23. Provide educational and outreach materials to enhance citizen access to existing income assistance and housing programs.
24. Consider allowing accessory dwelling units on lots such as granny flats and apartments in an attempt to provide affordable housing units.

Neighborhoods Goals and Action Statements

1. Establish City policies that promote neighborhood identity and stimulate resident involvement in neighborhood improvement.
 - a) Promote and support block parties and other events by permitting temporary, once-per-year street closures, display of emergency vehicles, and provision of street cleaning.
 - b) Promote seasonal “clean up, fix up” and beautification events.
 - c) Provide annual, free “amnesty pickup” of large refuse items.

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

- d) Adopt policies that discourage prevalent student rental housing in converted single-family residences.
 - e) Enforce existing parking regulations and speed limits in residential areas.
 - f) Consider adopting restrictions on overnight parking on residential streets. Establish a parking permitting program (with a two-vehicle exemption for each residence), with revenues earmarked for neighborhood enhancement.
2. Promote investment and infill in established residential neighborhoods. Items such as improving the availability and access to local parks, schools, and other public facilities as well as maintaining and improving neighborhood amenities such as sidewalks and street lighting
 3. Enforce provisions that reduce blighting influences on neighborhoods. Code and regulation are in place that gives these provisions related to blighting enforceability.
 - a) Prohibit on-street storage of commercial vehicles, RVs, utility trailers, boats, and similar vehicles.
 - b) Enforce City and County provisions for the removal of junk, abandoned vehicles, and other derelict items from residential yards.
 - c) Amend City and County zoning provisions to prohibit the construction of single-family residences in nonresidential districts.
 - d) Prohibit the keeping of livestock and use of barbed wire fencing in residential areas.
 - e) Review and, if needed, tighten accessory building size and setback standards.
 - f) Enforce standards for minimum housing conditions. Establish a semi-annual inspection program for all converted single-family residences used for rental.
 4. Pursue strategies with the University of Wyoming and WyoTech that will ultimately reduce student rental housing in converted single-family residences located in established neighborhoods.
 - a) Promote favorable land use policies that will encourage the development of innovative student housing configurations with convenient access to campuses.
 - b) Expedite the permitting process for renovation/reconfiguration of traditional dormitories and replacement of aging and obsolete on-campus student apartments.
 5. Amend the zoning ordinance to include major and minor waivers of setback and other dimensional requirements to allow and encourage expansion and reinvestment of older, smaller homes. Establish performance standards (size, height, and setbacks) for residential additions and new construction to prevent construction of oversized dwellings in established neighborhoods. Allowing accessory structures like “granny flats” can help in reinvestment of older, smaller homes.
 6. Encourage Neighborhood plans to allow control over teardowns and redevelopment in established neighborhood in order to maintain character.

7. Pursue growth management strategies that avoid overextension of the City infrastructure and ensure the availability of adequate public facilities to developing neighborhoods.
8. Identify strategies that promote developments that have a wide range of socioeconomic classes all contained within one neighborhood.