



Lander Code and Zoning FAQ's June 2020

The following questions were the most commonly asked when the proposed zoning code changes were announced. Several residents requested simplified answers to their questions, rather than having to read through a lengthy document written in "code-ese" that's unfamiliar to many. The following is presented to address these needs.

Why are these being proposed?

There are several reasons:

1) The [Lander City Master Plan of 2012](#) The 2012 Master plan was performed with a planning grant by DOWL/HKM. Along with current engineering and planning standards, input from several public forums and subject focus groups was used to create the action plan. City Council adopted the plan in the fall of 2012.

The Master Plan has 5 action items regarding infill development, developing a zoning plan that promotes graduated densities, and expanding residential opportunities in all zones and income levels.

2) There are several existing homes that-- if something happened to them-- could not be rebuilt due to current code requirements. They are non-conforming mostly due to lot size not meeting minimum requirements.

3) In a public forum in December 2019, Lander residents noted that housing (rent and purchase of single-family homes) was increasingly challenging for both cost and range of options. The issues most commonly noted included:

Young adults struggle to have income for housing, so leave Lander

Couples with "grown and flown" children want smaller homes on smaller lots

Businesses can't attract desired workforce due to housing costs

Aging parents want to live independently, yet close by for assistance when needed

4) In the last three years, several developers have proposed plans to build single-family homes at more affordable price plans, but their plans didn't conform to code-- such as having 5,000 square ft lots*-- and were denied. Modest changes to lot size would benefit landowner wanting to sell as land price is higher; better for the developer, who can build more efficiently; provides more options at varied price points for interested homebuyers.

* Lot sizes are referenced often in proposed changes. To help understand what different lot sizes are: lots in most zones are currently required to be 6,000 sq ft. This home sits on a 3,750 sq ft lot in a commercial zone. This option is proposed for corner lots in some residential zones.



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Most lots in the senior housing area are 5,250 ft sq, such as this home:



When were codes last updated?

The current zoning code was done in 1978. The last subdivision code was done in 2008 4-9-1 Subdivision and Land Use Regulations of the City of Lander. NOTE: What is being proposed are changes to zoning codes, not building codes. All new structures are still required to meet the building codes adopted by the City of Lander.

How were proposed changes developed?

In September 2018, an eight-person team of Lander staff, Lander Chamber, and Lander residents (including members of Lander Planning Commission) attended a two- and 1/2-day housing workshop with 9 other Wyoming communities. In 2019, the State provided grant funds for a small, medium, and large Wyoming town to review codes in hopes that other small, medium, and large towns could use information learned to apply to their communities. Lander was selected as the medium town.

With grant-funding, the team advanced with Community Builders and Cascadia Partners to learn more about housing needs in Lander. In November of 2019, a [survey](#) was made available to Lander residents, advertised through posters, city web-page, community announcements, and social media. Over 500 completed the survey, and [results can be found HERE](#). The survey had two goals:

- 1) Better understanding of Lander housing challenges from individual perspective;
and
- 2) Learn more about what types of housing would address needs



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Key take-aways from the survey:

- A large share of Lander residents are struggling with housing costs. 81% of respondents know people struggling to find adequate, safe housing they can afford, while 43% of respondents stated they were struggling with housing themselves.
- 30% of Lander households Lander are “cost burdened,” meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing, either rent or mortgage.
- Another 30% of Lander households are “severe cost burdened”, meaning over 50% of their income is spent on rent/mortgage.
- While most respondents live in single-family homes, they expressed a strong desire for more housing choices in Lander. Neighborhood-scale housing like bungalows, ADUs, townhouses or row-houses, and duplexes/triplexes/fourplexes received a strong showing of support, while more traditional small apartment buildings (6-12 units) received less but still moderate support. Large apartment buildings (more than 12 units) received the lowest amount of support, but still displayed enough interest to be considered an important housing type to be made available in limited cases.
 - 63% of respondents would consider living in a cottage, bungalow, or small single-family homes
 - 43% of respondents would consider living in townhouse or condo
 - 36% of respondents would consider living in an ADU
 - 48% of respondents stated they would be interested in constructing an ADU at their own homes
 - 31% of respondents would consider living in duplex, triplex, or quad
 - 23% of respondents would consider living in a small apartment building (6-12 units)
 - 13% of respondents would consider living in a small apartment building (more than 12 units)
- While most respondents are satisfied with Lander’s neighborhoods and the size of available homes, they are dissatisfied with housing costs, the quality of existing housing stock, and the types of housing available.
 - 62% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the cost of available housing
 - 43% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the types of housing choices available
 - 37% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of available housing stock

Also, in December 2019, the community was invited to participate in an interactive workshop to provide feedback on possible options for types of housing. Results from this workshop largely paralleled and confirmed findings from the survey.



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Most notably, workshop participants expressed interest in;

- Allowing for more flexibility in housing choices and offering a larger array of housing types and price points in Lander, especially housing types that fit the context and character of existing neighborhoods.
- Allowing for smaller homes to be built on smaller lots in Lander.
- Accessory dwelling units received strong support, especially as a housing option that provides extra income and housing stability for existing homeowners in Lander.

Using the community feedback provided by the survey and workshop, the team met weekly to incorporate stated goals through proposed changes to Lander's code. The proposed changes were presented to the Planning Commission, composed of seven Lander-area residents. After approval by the Planning Commission, the proposed changes were forwarded to Council for review and adoption.

What doesn't change?

- Required setbacks to neighbors or street
- Building permit requests still have to go through review process
- New developments and lot size changes have to go through the planning commission review process

Will changes affect ability to respond to fires in residences?

No. The LVFD equipment can reach 100' in height and handle firefighting in the prescribed side yard setback distance between buildings. Manufactured home parks will have prescribed side yard setbacks, and cottage cluster construction methods will be required to meet all existing fire codes.

Does this eliminate single family homes in R1?

No. Proposed changes allow for slightly increased density in R1 through allowing ADUs (see below). Proposed changes don't allow apartment buildings in R1. Minimum lot size remains the same in R1.

What is an "ADU"?

An ADU is an Additional Dwelling Unit, such as a basement apartment or "in-law" space above a garage. These already exist in Lander. ADUs are not eligible to be subdivided and sold as separate property. ADUs can be desirable as an additional income source for homeowners. Allowing ADUs means that existing homeowners would have the option to build an ADU should they choose.

If my neighbor builds an ADU, will it affect my property value?

There is no data that shows that neighboring ADUs have any affect- positive or negative- on adjacent landowners. Generally, property values in Wyoming are determined by size, construction type and quality of construction in a specific area. An ADU on an adjacent property should not impact your assessed value.



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What is a "cottage cluster"?

A cottage cluster refers to a group of homes on permanent foundation, with small personal yards and a shared common green space. Homes may be small but are not “tiny homes” (meaning small homes built on a mobile platform). Homes in cottage clusters require the same setbacks to lot lines as current codes for single family homes.

Will density change?

In developed residential areas, there is potential for change over time if homeowners decide to build ADUs. On larger single lots or contiguous lots, landowners have the option of building slightly more dense apartments or single-family homes.

How do parking requirements change?

For Main Street, this will allow a more historic presence as seen in 1st -4th blocks. Buildings can be close to the sidewalk, encouraging more pedestrian “window-shopping,” and increasing the feel of “Main Street” instead of a highway.

In neighborhoods, this may slightly increase on-street parking. Residents who want the convenience of parking immediately in front of their house can create driveways/parking pads on their property. Residents do not own the street in front of their property.

Does this result in tiny lots in town?

No. Lots are still required to ‘abut and have access to an officially approved street.’ Alley accessed dwellings can't be split from the main property.

Does this mean a huge apartment building complex will be built next to my house?

Highly unlikely. In R5, the highest density area, multi-family housing requires a minimum of 925 ft²/unit on interior lots and 625 ft²/unit for corner lots. In R2, a multi-family unit requires 1,875 square feet per dwelling unit.

How do parking requirements change?

Not requiring as much parking for commercial zones will allow for more traditional Main Street buildings as seen in the 100-400 block of Main. In residential zones, there may be a slight increase in on-street parking.

Why is it advantageous for Lander to have a range of housing options?

- Lander is a desirable place to live and has received national attention on many fronts. As has happened in other desirable locations, if nothing is done, Lander risks becoming a place where locals and/or elderly are priced out of the housing market.
- Having a range of housing options at a range of price points allows for a diverse workforce. Both private and public sector businesses have had desired employees reject offers due to housing prices.
- Many factors affect housing prices that are beyond city control. One thing that the city can do is make a wider range of development options available.



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What happens to non-conforming homes if proposed changes are accepted?

Currently there are dozens of homes in Landers that do not conform to existing minimum lot size requirements. If something were to happen to one of those homes, it would not be allowed to be rebuilt without first obtaining a variance from the Planning Commission. Proposed changes to minimum lots sizes would make a significant number of these homes conforming, reducing regulatory barriers for homeowners should they need to rebuild.

Aside from homes on lots that do not meet current minimum lot size requirements, the status of other non-conforming buildings is not anticipated to change due to the proposed code changes. The proposed code change will also not impact any exempted or historically "grandfathered" non-conforming buildings or uses.

Can the City Water and Sewer infrastructure handle more services with increased density?

Currently the water treatment plant is designed for 10,000 residents. Over the last 5 years High Pressure Water System upgrades have updated the transmission system to be more efficient with more consistent water pressure throughout the City.

Lander Sewer system and Lagoons are also oversized for our current population. The ongoing Sewer Lining project is reducing the groundwater inflow and infiltration which has decreased the clean water going into the lagoons. This allows for a more efficient treatment process and meets all DEQ permit requirements for existing conditions and well into the future project growth of the City.

Synopsis of changes:

- Allowing slightly more density was identified by Lander residents as desired goal in 2012 master plan
- This has been actively developed for over a year and a half.
- The public was involved in a survey in December and workshop, and now has the opportunity to be involved again.
- Landowners and developers have more options

How do I comment on proposed changes?

Public Comments are welcome at the City Council meeting June 9th

You can join the meeting by [Zoom meeting](#)

Or dial in by phone [1-253-215-8782](tel:1-253-215-8782)

Meeting ID **919 6156 3890** Password **461131**

All City Ordinances require 3 readings before enactment. In addition to the Public Hearing and First Reading of June 9th, there will be opportunities to comment on the proposed zoning code changes at the Regular Council meetings of July 14th and August 11th.

Written comments can also be submitted to City Hall by dropping off, postal service, or email to landercity@landerwyoming.org **prior to June 24th.**