

11 HOUSING

11.1 STATEMENT OF INTENT

All members of the community have a right to a safe, affordable, and quality home.

11.2 BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

During the Comprehensive Plan update process, housing concerns focused on the quality of the housing stock. Many residents felt that the cost of housing was reasonable (that housing prices were not rising faster than wages) but that the condition of the housing stock was not reliable. Additionally, the lack of workforce housing was a concern. Also seen as desirable for our future were a variety of housing types to cater to a population with varying needs, building homes in areas where infrastructure and services are available, and mitigating impacts of development on our natural environment.

A query of 2007 tax records at the Albany County Assessors' Office shows the total dwelling unit count for the county as well as a breakdown of type. Table 11.1 shows the countywide breakdown; Table 11.2 shows the breakdown for the unincorporated areas of the county.

The majority of the housing stock is located in the southern portion of the county with most of the units in the Laramie area. (See Map 11.1, Housing Distribution.)

Housing affordability is an important issue. A family earning the median family income in Albany County should have been able to afford the median-priced house in 2000. The housing affordability index is a comparative figure that assumes a 20% down payment, that not more than 25% of a family's income goes to paying the mortgage, and an interest rate of 8.03 in 2000. In 2000, Albany County's housing affordability index was 132 (above 100 means affordable).

The median housing value is higher in the unincorporated areas than in the county as a whole. In 2007, the median value of an Albany County home was \$171,333 in the unincorporated areas of the county and \$168,900 countywide.

The county, including the City of Laramie, has a lower owner-occupancy rate than the State of Wyoming average (51% versus 70% in 2000). This may be due to the

COUNTYWIDE	
Single Family Residences	11,293
Multi-Family Dwellings	914
Mobile Homes	2,048
Number of Housing Units	14,255

Table 11.1: Countywide housing (Albany County Assessor, 2007)

UNINCORPORATED AREAS	
Single Family Residences	2,388
Multi-Family Dwellings	20
Mobile Homes	333
Number of Housing Units	2,741

Table 11.2: Housing count for unincorporated Albany County (Albany County Assessor, 2007)

presence of university students who tend to rent. It also reflects the lower median age, which indicates the presence of more young people who have not yet purchased homes, as well as reflects the lower median income. For additional information on Albany County demographics, see Appendix 3.

The quality of housing is dependent on four factors:

1. There is quality construction.
2. All of the essential components of the house (frame, roof, electrical, plumbing, HCAV, etc.) are designed properly and integrated.
3. There are sufficient services to the house (water, electric, etc.).
4. The house is safe and creates no health problems (sewerage, water, air).

Unfortunately, there are no county building code requirements for individual residential homes. This means that there is no guarantee that homes have been constructed with proper electrical, plumbing, and support systems. The County also does not require proof of adequate water or septic before building.

Following the Long Range Growth Plan described in Chapter 3 will help guide new home development to suitable locations in the county. New houses that are built closer to existing facilities will result in affordable, yet safe, homes for our families and our neighbors.

11.3 HOUSING OBJECTIVES

- H1. Assure construction of safe, affordable, and quality homes while using land efficiently and sensibly and protecting our environment and natural resources.
- H2. Promote continued and sensible growth in developed areas, protecting the character, scenic views, and resources of our lands.
- H3. Direct developments close to major roads where possible in order to maintain the quality of public services, promote growth efficiency, and respect landscape sensitivity.
- H4. Locate housing that can accommodate employment.
- H5. Locate and promote housing that can efficiently accommodate future growth.
- H6. Encourage a mix of housing types, sizes, and styles to meet the demands of county citizens.
- H7. Ensure that new development is safe to inhabit.



11.4 IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIES

1. Require that new construction must meet the adopted International Building Code (IBC). (2)
2. Encourage housing developments that provide variety in housing style, type, and density and are consistent with this Comprehensive Plan. (1)
3. Support developments that use planned unit developments (PUD) to increase density with quality land design and integration of land uses. (1)
4. Encourage development in areas that do not detract from our scenic views. (1)
5. Encourage developers to feature natural site amenities when possible in new housing developments, and to avoid or mitigate negative impacts on the boundary communities. (1, 2)

ACTIONS

- Adopt and implement the most current International Building Code (IBC) after obtaining permission from the State of Wyoming. (2)
- Require the licensing of contractors and establish enforcement with code inspections of improvements, increasing fees to help enforce these standards. (2)
- Require that deteriorated homes no longer safe according to IBC standards should be improved or removed from the property or improved. (2)
- Create a development guideline workbook, that includes a point system for development approval. (2)
- Adopt a building permit and plan review fee schedule. (2, 3)
- Consider creation of an in-house department for code enforcement, contract with the City of Laramie building inspectors, or contract with another source. (1, 2)
- Adopt an ordinance that regulates the visibility of inoperable vehicles, tires, unused building materials, weeds, rubbish and garbage, etc. (1, 2)
- Revise the platting and subdivision regulations to promote efficiency and safety. (2, 3)



11.5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

City of Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan: includes housing and needs assessment for city of Laramie (2003)

