

Earlier this month, the Fort Collins City Council adopted important changes to the city's land use code that will help create more housing options for residents. The city's Land Use Code had not been updated in 25 years. In the meantime, our population has grown by more than 50 percent, and housing costs have skyrocketed.

The changes expand affordable housing incentives, allow for increased density in neighborhoods across the city, and provide for a more efficient and predictable development review process. We support the newly adopted Land Development Code and the city's efforts to increase affordable housing in Fort Collins.

Updates to the code were contemplated for many years after much consultation with residents, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses. This robust engagement process culminated in City Plan and the Transit Master Plan in 2019, and the new Land Development Code this year.

While some have argued that the updated code was adopted quietly and quickly, in reality, these changes have been discussed for years during council work sessions, and community meetings. They are also spelled out in many planning documents adopted by past Councils.

City Plan, adopted in 2019 and developed with the input of thousands of community members, specifically calls for "expanding housing options in existing neighborhoods" and supporting and encouraging "the private development of affordable housing by offering incentives". It also calls for "reducing barriers to the construction and rehabilitation of long-term affordable housing units". The Transit Master Plan, also adopted in 2019, talks about the ability to build out transit as we increase land-use density.

Our widely supported climate action plan also discusses the importance of affordable and sustainable housing. The "Our Climate Future" framework document adopted last year, specifically states that one of our next moves is to "evaluate opportunities within the Land Use Code to better encourage the development of "complete neighborhoods" that include a variety of housing options". In addition, this document specifically calls out the need for "healthy, affordable housing". It states that almost 20% of homeowners and 60% of renters cannot afford their monthly housing costs, and that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are disproportionately impacted by these costs. Building more affordable housing is an equity issue.

As local elected officials, we hear from residents who struggle to find housing in our community. We have met with teachers, nurses, first responders, and people in the service industry who are desperate for solutions. Fort Collins is no longer affordable for so many individuals and families. Many are facing high rents, and home ownership seems more and more out of reach. Allowing for more density in neighborhoods, permitting Accessory Dwelling Units for all single-family homes and duplexes, and incentivizing affordable housing will increase options for residents who cannot find or afford housing, or want to downsize or live in a smaller, more sustainable homes.

The new Land Development Code will provide the opportunity to address the housing crisis in our community. We ask you to join us in supporting these changes that will build a more sustainable, affordable, and equitable community.

Kristin Stephens, Larimer County Commissioner
Representative Andrew Boesenecker
Representative Cathy Kipp