



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

P.O. Box 1190  
Fort Collins, CO 80522-1190  
Planning (970) 498-7683 Planning Fax (970) 498-7711  
Building (970) 498-7700 Building Fax (970) 498-7667  
<http://www.larimer.org/planning>

### “TINY HOUSES”

The term "**tiny house**" usually means one of two things:

- an RV/trailer/house on wheels, or
- a small house on a foundation, whether pre-fabricated (manufactured/modular) or built on site.

Larimer County has jurisdiction for unincorporated areas outside of city or town limits. To place a “tiny house” within one of the County’s eight incorporated cities and towns, please check with the appropriate city or town planning and building departments.



A “**Tiny House on Wheels**” is considered a **Recreational Vehicle (RV)** and regulated by the Land Use Code (LUC) instead of the building code. There are restrictions on where and when they can be lived in. They are not considered permanent homes and cannot be occupied year-round.

An **RV** (including a “tiny house on wheels”) can be used as temporary living quarters for recreational, camping, travel or seasonal use. An RV can either have its own motor power or be mounted on or towed by another vehicle, including camping trailers, fifth wheel trailers, motor homes, travel trailers and truck campers. Other uses of an RV include seasonal worker housing and a temporary dwelling during construction. Please refer to the LUC for more details: [Land Use Code](#)

**Vacation or Recreational use of an RV on a vacant lot** - Outside of an RV Park or campground a single (one) RV is allowed on vacant property under the following conditions –

- The RV cannot be located on the lot for more than 180 days in any 12-month period. The 180 day limitation applies to any and all RVs located on the lot during any 12-month period.
- Vacation or recreational use of an RV on vacant land is allowed in the following zoning districts:
  - **FO (Forestry), FO-1 (Forestry), O (Open), T (Tourist),**
  - and only in the west half of Range 70, in ranges 71-78 and in Townships 11 and 12, Ranges 68-78 of the **E (Estate), E-1 (Estate) and RE (Rural Estate)**
- The lot where the RV is located can be owner occupied or leased to an occupant of the RV for a minimum of 31 consecutive days.
- An address must be assigned to the lot and the address must be displayed pursuant to county requirements.
- The RV must be occupied (not stored). The RV can be pre-located for easy access and use on the property. Each day the RV is physically on the lot shall count towards the maximum 180 days.
- The placement of, and hookups to, the recreational vehicle must be in compliance with all applicable building, health, fire, electrical, mechanical and related codes (*permits may be required*).
- The RV must meet all applicable zoning setback requirements for buildings.
- The RV must remain readily mobile. Nothing may be attached to an RV or placed in a manner that would prevent or hinder the immediate removal of the RV.
- **The RV must have a current registration and vehicle license. For more info contact Larimer County Clerk & Recorder Vehicle Licensing Office through the website <http://larimer.org/vehiclicensing/> or by calling (970) 498-7878.**

**RV’s on a lot with a dwelling** may be stored year round. The RV can only be occupied by family members up to 180 days out of a 12 month period. The RV cannot be occupied by friends or other individuals or leased.

**“Tiny House on a Foundation”** The structure can either be pre-fabricated (manufactured/modular) or built on site under a valid building permit. To be considered a legal dwelling, a tiny home must obtain a building permit, be designed to meet site-specific snow, wind, flood plain, wildfire hazard and other requirements, and be installed on a permanent foundation. Engineered plans may be required. Tiny homes must meet all other building code requirements, including:

- Minimum 144 sq. feet area in the high wind area (or designed by a structural engineer if smaller)
- Minimum 7' ceiling height
- One egress window or door leading directly to the outside for all sleeping areas
- Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms
- Minimum plumbing, waste disposal, heating and energy code requirements
- Electrical permit & inspection approvals through the Colorado Electrical Board
- Minimum 70 sq. ft. for habitable rooms



For more information, please consult the Larimer County Building Dept. through its website <http://larimer.org/building/> or call **970-498-7700**.

### **Health Department requirements for Occupying a Tiny House**

Whether your Tiny House is built on a permanent foundation or on wheels like a recreational vehicle, wastewater generated inside will need to be properly managed.

#### **“Tiny House on a Foundation”**

In the case of a Tiny House on a foundation, the house will need to be connected to the public sewer system if one is available, or connected to an on-site wastewater system approved and permitted by the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment. A full on-site wastewater system is most common, consisting of a septic tank and soil treatment area (or leach field). A full on-site wastewater system is capable of treating all of the wastewater generated inside the home - including toilet wastes and grey water from other fixtures.

On some lots it is not feasible to install a full on-site wastewater system due to very small lot area, or other constraints such as nearby wells, lakes or streams. In this situation, an alternative system such as a sealed vault can be considered. A sealed vault functions like a septic tank without an outlet. Vaults must be pumped out by a licensed pumper each time they fill. Because pumping is expensive, vault systems are generally practical for seasonal or weekend use only.

Some Tiny Houses use composting toilets to treat toilet wastes. The remaining flows from fixtures connected to sinks, bath tubs or showers, and laundry facilities are called grey water. Under current Colorado standards, grey water must be treated in the same way as sewage flows containing toilet wastes. This means either a full septic system or a sealed vault in areas where public sewer is not available. In the future, separate grey water regulations may be enacted which could modify how flows that do not include toilet waste can be managed.

If the Tiny House has NO interior water fixtures such as a sink, tub, shower or toilet, an additional option that can be considered for seasonal or weekend use may be a vaulted privy. These are the types of toilet facilities seen at campgrounds and many trail heads. The vault is sealed in order to prevent contamination of groundwater, and requires pumping service just like the units at trail heads.

#### **“Tiny House on Wheels”**

The options for managing wastewater for a Tiny House on wheels include those listed above for units on a foundation. Public sewer, a full on-site wastewater system, a sealed vault, or a vaulted privy can be designed to connect to the Tiny House while it is parked on a lot. Because a Tiny House on wheels is classified as a recreational vehicle, an additional option is to tow the Tiny House to a sanitary dump station such as those located at some campgrounds and RV parks. Because the wastewater storage tanks for a Tiny House on wheels may be very small, this option is only feasible for units that are moved every few days.

Wastewater generated inside a Tiny House may not be discharged onto the ground surface or into a lake or stream.

Please contact the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment if you need additional information about the process for permitting and installing an on-site wastewater treatment system. *Information is available on the Department's website at, <http://larimer.org/health/ehs/isds.asp>, or by calling (970) 498-6775.*