

“TINY HOUSES”

A bill ([HB22-1242](#)) was introduced into the Colorado Legislature on 2/16/22 to regulate Tiny Homes constructed offsite that will be occupied as residences. Depending on the bill’s fate, the rules for Tiny Home may substantially change.



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

- an RV/trailer/house on wheels, or
- a tiny house on a foundation, no more than 400 sq. ft. in floor area, either manufactured offsite 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 that city or town planning and building department.

A “**Tiny House on Wheels**” is considered a **Recreational Vehicle (RV)** and is regulated by the Land Use Code (LUC) instead of the building code. There are restrictions on where and when RVs 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 comply 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/vehiclelicensing/> or by calling (970) 498-7878.**

RVs 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.

A “Tiny House on a Foundation” can either be prefabricated (manufactured/modular) or built on site under a valid building permit. To be considered a legal dwelling, a tiny house 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 houses must meet all other building code requirements*, including:

- Designed by a licensed Colorado engineer in High Winds or Heavy Snow areas
- Minimum 70 sq. ft. floor area for all habitable rooms
- Minimum 6’8” ceiling height, 6’4” in bathrooms/kitchens, less in sleeping lofts*
- One egress window or door leading directly to the outside for all sleeping areas
- Handrails, guardrails, and stairs to code except for sleeping loft access ladders*
- Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms
- Minimum plumbing, waste disposal, heating, and energy code requirements
- Electrical permit and inspection approvals through Larimer County
- Prefabricated Tiny Houses are regulated by the Colorado Division of Housing



***NOTE:** Larimer County has adopted the 2021 IRC and Appendix Q for Tiny Houses

For more information, please consult the Building Division website at <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. Wastewater generated inside a Tiny House, including grey water, may not be discharged onto the ground surface or into a lake or stream.

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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 treatment 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), and is required except in cases where the property cannot accommodate one.

On some lots it is not feasible to install a full on-site wastewater system due to very small lot area, or inability to meet setbacks to nearby wells, lakes, or streams. In these rare cases, 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 only practical for seasonal or weekend use.

Some Tiny Houses use composting toilets to treat toilet wastes. Composting toilets must be approved by the National Sanitation Foundation or an equivalent testing agency. The remaining flows from fixtures connected to sinks, bathtubs or showers, and laundry facilities are called grey water. Under current regulations, 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.

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.

“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.

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.*