

MINUTES
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - YUMA CITY HALL
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA
August 5, 2025
5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the Regular City Council Worksession to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Martinez, Morris, McClendon, Smith, Morales, Watts, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: None
Staffmembers Present: Acting City Administrator, John D. Simonton
Director of Community Development, Alyssa Linville
Building Official, Randall Crist
Various department heads or their representatives
City Attorney, Richard W. Files
Deputy City Clerk, Janet L. Pierson

I. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN UPDATE

Linville presented an update on the Affordable Housing Plan as follows:

- Background
 - In 2024, the Arizona Department of Housing offered a grant for communities needing an Affordable Housing Plan.
 - The timing of the grant aligned with the City's formation of the Attainable Housing Committee, making it an ideal opportunity to develop the Affordable Housing Plan alongside the committee's ongoing efforts.
 - The City applied and was awarded \$92,000.
 - Initially, the plan aimed to identify ways to increase housing diversity and preserve affordability.
 - After the state legislature mandated that all communities publish an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment by January 1, 2025 (and every five years thereafter), the City expanded the project's scope.
 - The consultant completed and published the assessment on time, making it part of the overall housing plan effort.
- Stakeholder Engagement
 - Community and stakeholder engagement played a key role in this project.
 - Throughout the drafting and data collection phases, the consultant met with various groups—including the Attainable Housing Committee, local developers, nonprofit organizations, and City staff—to gather input and feedback.
- Strategy Framework
 - Rising costs were identified as a major challenge, both for rentals and homeownership.
 - Achieving homeownership is becoming increasingly difficult locally and nationwide.
 - Increases in material and labor costs are contributing to overall housing affordability issues.

- A shortage of available land in the community is constraining new development.
- Stakeholders expressed strong support for constructing new affordable housing and diversifying housing types (e.g., single-family and multifamily).
- There was interest in maintaining and preserving current affordable housing stock.
- Emphasis was placed on the importance of educating the public about affordable housing and housing diversity.
- These insights helped shape three core objectives outlined in the Affordable Housing Plan.
- Objective 1 - Support the new construction of affordable housing and preserve existing affordable housing
 - Action 1.1. Continue investing in redevelopment, revitalization, and infill of older neighborhoods
 - Action 1.2. Support the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of naturally occurring affordable housing by nonprofits or mission-driven developers
 - Action 1.3. Explore innovative construction methods
 - Container housing, 3D printing, and modular buildings
 - Action 1.4. Affordable housing zoning overlay
 - Voluntary opportunities for developers looking to increase density
 - Action 1.5. Continue removing barriers to the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Action 1.6. Review tap fees and other development fees to encourage different housing types and the production of smaller homes
- Objective 2 - Increase education, communication, and information on housing affordability to increase support for and access to affordable housing
 - Action 2.1. Promote and build support for affordable housing
 - Action 2.2. Improve resident access to housing information and resources
- Objective 3 - Support financing for new construction, preservation, and seek to expand funding sources for affordable housing
 - Action 3.1. Work with developers to better understand the financing barriers to missing middle projects and consider partnerships with financial institutions to address such barriers
 - Build on currently available funding for affordable housing projects, such as Community Development Block Grants, and explore other funding opportunities.
- Community Education and Engagement Campaign
 - The City will implement a public outreach campaign to increase awareness and support for affordable housing efforts.
 - Collaborate with the City's Communication Team to launch a targeted social media marketing campaign.
 - Design and distribute informational flyers at City buildings, public meetings, and community events.
 - Host pop-up information booths at local events.
 - City website updates with housing resources.
 - Develop an Affordable Housing page on the City's website with data, definitions, and resource links.
- Implementation and Next Steps
 - The Affordable Housing Action Plan offers flexible strategies the City can adapt over time.
 - Start with strategies that align with existing efforts.
 - Support infill and redevelopment in older neighborhoods.
 - Promote ADUs and flexible zoning options.

- Explore new funding sources and partnerships.
- Use the plan to support funding applications and program design.
 - The plan can strengthen grant applications and guide collaboration with developers, nonprofits, and state partners.

The Affordable Housing Plan is scheduled to come before City Council for approval in September. The latest version, which incorporates Councilmember feedback, has been provided to City Council for review. Following approval, the implementation plan will be reviewed to identify the most practical action items to initiate.

Discussion

- The public education campaign is envisioned as a multi-faceted effort, aiming not only to inform the broader community about affordable housing but also to connect individuals in need with available resources, potentially involving public-private partnerships such as with mortgage companies. **(Mayor Nicholls/Linville)**
- The \$92,000 grant was specifically awarded for the development of the Affordable Housing Plan and the educational campaign that will follow its approval. Additionally, having this plan in place positions the City to qualify for future grant opportunities related to housing. **(Morris/Linville)**
- The expansion of Arizona's down payment and mortgage assistance program into rural areas was recently announced. The City has an Industrial Development Authority, and further information will be gathered to explore potential involvement in the program. **(Smith/Linville)**
- The idea of reserving a portion of market-rate housing developments for affordable units was well received, and local developers expressed interest in exploring this approach. Discussions also highlighted their enthusiasm for increased density opportunities, which could support the inclusion of affordable units in future projects. **(Watts/Linville)**
- While the City has limited control over housing costs, engaging local mortgage lenders and banks to raise awareness about existing financing programs that offer benefits like low or no down payments and waived mortgage insurance could significantly support housing affordability without relying heavily on taxpayer funding. **(Morales/Linville)**

II. BUILDING CODE UPDATES

Crist presented the following briefing on the proposed building code updates based on the 2024 versions of the International Building Code (IBC), the International Existing Building Code (IEBC), the International Residential Code (IRC), and the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC):

- Why Is It Time to Update?
 - The City is on its regular six-year building code update cycle.
 - Building codes are released every three years, but updating every six years helps avoid disruption to the development community.
 - Modern codes include updated materials and construction techniques, such as cargo containers now being addressed in both the IRC and IBC.
 - Staying current helps maintain a strong Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, which affects insurance underwriting.
 - The City currently holds a favorable rating of two on a scale of one to 10, where one shows exemplary preparedness for fires and 10 indicates inadequate fire protection.
 - Updated codes enhance public safety and save lives.

- The updated building code documents are scheduled for first review by City Council on September 3rd.
- The Review and Recommendation Process
 - The review process took approximately one year due to high interest and participation.
 - A total of 30 meetings were held, totaling 45 hours, involving two advisory boards.
 - The Building Advisory Board reviewed the IBC, IEBC, and IPMC.
 - The Residential Advisory Board reviewed the IRC and IPMC.
 - A chapter-by-chapter review was conducted for all four codes.
 - Public participation was strong early on, supported by multiple email communications.
 - The review included input from neighboring jurisdictions (Somerton, San Luis, and Yuma County) to help align codes for easier regional adoption.
 - Local architects and design professionals participated, contributing to a well-rounded review.
 - The process included both electronic and paper reviews, with teleconference access available for remote participation.
- Major Changes and Amendments to the 2024 IBC/IEBC
 - Enhanced Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
 - Recognition of new construction techniques and material types, including cargo containers, veneers, and glass.
 - Life safety layout requirements for temporary structures (those in use for 180 days or less)
 - Updates related to lithium battery storage, such as the introduction of fire sprinkler requirements in certain occupancies where they were not previously mandated.
 - Carbon monoxide detectors added to warehouse or storage buildings.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act
 - Historically the City of Yuma has used the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title III Regulations and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
 - The ADA has not been updated since 2010 and is a complex federal document that is difficult to navigate for inspectors, plan examiners, and design professionals.
 - For the first time, the City is considering adopting Chapter 11 of the IBC for accessibility standards.
 - Many other jurisdictions, including both urban and rural areas, have already adopted Chapter 11 of the IBC.
 - Previous concerns about conflicts between Chapter 11 and the ADA have been addressed, and Chapter 11 is now believed to meet or exceed ADA requirements.
 - The adoption of Chapter 11 is expected to streamline accessibility compliance and improve clarity for all stakeholders.
- Updated Accessibility in the 2024 IBC
 - Turning radius for wheelchairs increased from 60” to 67” for new restroom construction/accessible toilet compartments.
 - An extra 18” vertical grab bar is required on the side wall at accessible toilets/compartments. This was not required in the 2010 ADA.
 - Accessibility is required in private clubs and religious facilities, which were previously exempt in the 2010 ADA.
 - Power operated doors are required for Assembly occupancies over 300 persons, and for Business, Mercantile and Hotel occupancies over 500 persons. This was not required in the 2010 ADA.
 - Family or assisted-use toilet rooms are required in Assembly and Mercantile occupancies where an aggregate of six or more male and female water closets are required, and shall include only one water closet and one lavatory, with some exceptions such as a urinal. There

- were no requirements in the 2010 ADA for family or assisted-use toilet rooms.
- Adult changing stations are required in Assembly or Mercantile Occupancies where family or assisted use toilet rooms are required; schools with rooms or spaces used for assembly purposes where an aggregate of six or more male and female water closets are required for that room or space; and colleges where an aggregate of 12 or more male and female water closets are required to serve the classrooms and lecture halls. This was not required in the 2010 ADA.
 - Accessible route (elevator) required to connect each accessible story, mezzanine and occupiable roofs in multilevel buildings and facilities, including two-story buildings. This was not required for two-story buildings in the 2010 ADA.
 - Exception for stories, mezzanines, and occupiable roofs that have an aggregate area of not more than 3,000 square feet.
 - Code Changes to the 2024 IRC
 - Timers are now required for bathroom exhaust fans in new residential construction
 - Existing Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter requirements remain unchanged.
 - A physical separation is now required between the dwelling and lithium-ion battery storage
 - Whole-house surge protection is now required at the electrical service panel
 - The requirement for separate enclosures for dual electrical disconnects (e.g., solar systems in large homes) has been amended for flexibility
 - Chapter 11 energy efficiency stretch code provisions have been made optional to support attainable housing initiatives
 - A stretch code is a more stringent version of a building code that goes beyond the base requirements and is designed to “stretch” energy efficiency and sustainability goals
 - Existing garages and accessory structures may now be air conditioned, subject to compliance with applicable provisions
 - Changes and Amendments to the 2024 IPMC
 - Existing cooling systems must remain in operational condition
 - Clear polycarbonate panels (not plywood) are required for securing vacant structures
 - Portable space heaters are prohibited from serving as the primary source of required heating
 - The City will retain the 2018 IPMC minimum size standards for efficiency units:
 - 220 square feet for two occupants (the 2024 IPMC would have reduced this to 190 square feet)
 - 320 square feet for three occupants (the 2024 IPMC would have reduced this to 260 square feet)
 - Recommend the Adoption of the 2024 Building Codes
 - All meetings were open to the public with public input
 - Building and Residential Advisory Boards recommended approval with unanimous votes
 - City staff recommends approval

Mayor Nicholls expressed appreciation for the significant time and expertise contributed by the members of the Building and Residential Advisory Boards, recognizing their collective efforts as a valuable investment in the community.

Discussion

- The addition of push buttons is only required for doors that do not otherwise open automatically. (**Mayor Nicholls/Crist**)

- Accessibility should be a priority in all new multi-story buildings, regardless of size, and should not be compromised due to cost. This approach aligns with the City’s broader efforts to enhance accessibility in public spaces. By requiring elevators or alternatives such as LULAs (Limited Use Limited Application elevators), the City has an opportunity to lead by example and establish a new standard for inclusive design. **(McClendon/Crist)**
- The 3,000-square-foot threshold for elevator requirements in multi-story buildings was selected as a practical benchmark. One of the few buildings in Yuma near that size voluntarily included an elevator, demonstrating that some property owners already prioritize accessibility. **(Watts/Crist)**
- While new construction has specific accessibility requirements, remodels must allocate at least 20% of project costs toward removing existing barriers, with priority given to entryways, interior circulation, and restrooms. The surge protectors required in the IRC are small, panel-mounted devices—not consumer-grade power strips. **(Morales/Crist)**
- Elevator requirements do not apply to residential buildings under the Fair Housing Act unless accessibility cannot be provided on the ground floor. The board expressed mixed views on requiring elevators in small two-story buildings, citing concerns about cost, maintenance, and the potential impact on project feasibility. **(Morales/Crist)**
- Linking elevator requirements to differing uses between floors would be difficult to enforce, as building occupancy can change over time. **(Morris/Crist)**
- While the requirement for timers on exhaust fans in new buildings was initially proposed for fire safety, it was ultimately adopted for energy efficiency. In existing buildings, adding a timer would typically only be required if circuits are added or modified. Requiring a licensed electrician for this update when no other electrical work is being done could add unnecessary cost and complexity to minor remodels. **(Mayor Nicholls/Morris/Crist)**
- Educating homeowners and encouraging installation of exhaust fan timers in existing buildings, as opposed to requiring them for all remodels, would promote awareness while allowing flexibility for homeowners to make their own decisions. **(Smith/Crist)**
- The continued focus on maintaining practical energy efficiency standards is appreciated, especially as building codes have become increasingly influenced by political considerations in recent years. **(Morris/Crist)**

III. REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA OF AUGUST 6, 2025

Resolution R2025-081 – Minor General Plan Amendment: Northwest and North of the Intersection of Colorado Street and 20th Avenue (amend the City of Yuma General Plan to change the land use designation from Low Density Residential to High Density Residential) (Plng & Nbhd Svcs/Cmty Plng)

Discussion

- While concerns were raised by nearby residents about the potential impacts of a proposed housing project, including reduced property values and increased traffic, the Yuma County Assessor’s Office indicated that property values are based on comparable homes within the same neighborhood, so the new development is not expected to affect nearby single-family home values. Additionally, the City’s Engineering Department reviewed the project and, as of now, has not identified any traffic congestion or speeding issues related to the proposed development. **(Smith/Linville)**

EXECUTIVE SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

Motion (Smith/Morales): To adjourn the meeting to Executive Session. Voice vote: **approved** 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

APPROVED:

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor

DRAFT

Approved at the City Council Meeting of: _____ City Clerk: _____
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