



**COLORADO**  
Department of Local Affairs

# Larimer County Accessory Living Area Toolkit

*A complete guide for Larimer County  
Residents interested in Accessory Living Areas*

# Contents & Goals

Welcome to Larimer County’s Accessory Living Area Toolkit. This document has been created to support property owners in unincorporated Larimer County as they navigate building an Accessory Living Area (ALA). This toolkit has been developed by Larimer County’s Office of Housing Stability and the Community Development Department. The Community Development Department ensures compliance with the adopted codes and protects the health and safety of residents in unincorporated areas of Larimer County. The Housing Stability Office works to address the area’s top housing needs through regional coordination and expansion of housing resources. Learn more about these teams by scanning the QR codes.



Community Development



Office of Housing Stability

## What you’ll find inside:

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# What is an ALA?

## What are Accessory Living Areas (ALAs)?

Accessory Living Areas (ALAs) are finished spaces that are secondary to the primary dwelling on the lot. They are designed to function as a separate living area from the primary dwelling, but could be either attached to the primary structure or they could stand alone. An ALA could be a converted detached garage, or a converted basement or attic space. They can also be newly constructed units, detached or attached to the main dwelling.

### What's the difference between an ALA and an ADU?

You may have heard of ADUs – Accessory Dwelling Units – as a common acronym describing an additional dwelling unit on a single property. ALAs are the same! The only difference is the acronym the County uses when discussing these types of units.



*Larimer County ALA Website*

## Why are ALAs important to our community?

Housing costs are rising across the nation, and Larimer County is no exception. The existence of affordable rental housing stock has declined. Accessory Living Areas are part of the solution:

- They are less costly to construct, as they are able to access existing infrastructure and resources.
- ALAs can be offered at a relatively affordable rate due to their small size.
- Homeowners with ALAs can receive rental income to support paying their mortgage or other bills. For homeowners with a fixed or low-moderate income, ALAs can provide housing security.
- ALAs can support multi-generational living arrangements, which is especially necessary for the aging population of Larimer County.
- Supporting ALA development is a tool local governments use across Colorado to prevent urban sprawl and promote greener development practices.

# Would an ALA work for my property?

Check out the types of ALAs below as you consider which would best fit your properties' needs.

## Attached

Building an **attached ALA** can be more affordable than constructing a detached structure. It also is a great option for smaller lot sizes. While attached ALAs may be newly constructed additions, they could also be renovations of existing space, like a basement or attic. If you're considering this option, know that you may need to evaluate the structural integrity of the primary dwelling.

## Detached

A **detached ALA** could be a newly constructed detached structure, or the renovation of an existing structure such as a barn or a garage. If you're interested in building a detached ALA, there are a few considerations to keep in mind. The ALA should be located within 300 feet of the primary residence, and it must remain clear that the primary residence is the main home on the property.

### Examples

Basement Conversion



Attached ALA



Converted Garage/Barn



Detached ALA



## Conversion

As you read above, a conversion could be either detached or attached to the main structure. A conversion is often the most affordable option, because the owner is not paying building costs for a pre-existing space. However, a permitting process will still be necessary.

# Would an ALA work for my property?

The county has some size restrictions for ALAs, based on the size of your lot and the size of your home. Follow the flow chart to determine how you'd calculate the maximum size of your ALA!

## How big can my ALA be?

*Step one:* Calculate 75% of the square footage of your primary dwelling.

**Tips:**

- \*Don't include a basement in your square footage when you calculate 75%!
- \*The minimum size an ALA can be is 750 sq. ft., even if 75% percent of your primary home is less than that!
- \*Want to exceed the maximum? You may be able to appeal the standard. [Contact the Planning Division](#) for more info!

*Step two:* How big is your lot?

< 15,000 sq. ft.

15,000-100,000 sq. ft.

>100,000 sq. ft.

The maximum size of your ALA is the total from step one, or **900 sq. ft.**, whichever is **smaller!**

The maximum size of your ALA is the total from step one or **1,000 sq. ft.**, whichever is **smaller!**

The maximum size of your ALA is the total from step one or **1,200 sq. ft.**, whichever is **smaller!**

## Example:

My home is 1,300 sq. ft., not including my basement. 75% of my home's square footage is 975 sq. ft. My total property lot is less than 15,000 sq. ft. Therefore, the maximum size of my ALA is 900 sq. ft., because that is the maximum size allowed on my lot. If my home were 1,100 sq. ft., I'd use 825 sq. ft. as the maximum size of my ALA, because the 75% calculation is smaller than 900 sq. ft.

# I'm Ready to Build - Where Do I Start?



## Prior to Permitting

Larimer County no longer requires applicants to go through a planning process before applying for an ALA building permit. That means building your ALA just got a lot easier! Here is what property owners should consider before applying for a building permit:

### 1. Utility Approval

Before you submit a building permit, you **must** obtain approval from your utility service providers and complete a Utility Approval form. Scan the QR code to access the form!



*ALA Utility Approval Worksheet*

### 2. Before you begin...

Are you in a Flood Hazard Zone or a wetland? ALAs cannot be built in Zone AE, and other zones and wetlands may have restrictions as well. Check out the [Interactive Zoning Map](#) to see your flood zone and the [CODEX Map](#) to see if you're in a wetland. Need help? Reach out to [Floodplains](#) or the [Planning Division](#).

### 3. Fees & Engineering Conditions

**Transportation Capital Expansion Fees & Fire Impact Fees:** these impact fees are required on new development to ensure our roads and resources meet the needs of our community. Refer to the [TCEF website](#) for an estimated price. The ALA should use the **same point of access** from the road as the main dwelling.

### 4. Building Code Requirements & Fire

ALAs are subject to the same building code requirements as other residential units. Fire sprinklers may be required in new structures. Learn more about [Larimer County's building codes](#).

## Questions?

**On Call Planner**

[planning@larimer.org](mailto:planning@larimer.org)

**Building Division**

970.498.7660

**Engineering Department**

[eng-devrev@larimer.org](mailto:eng-devrev@larimer.org)

**Access Permits**

970.498.5709

**Floodplains**

[eng-floodplain@larimer.org](mailto:eng-floodplain@larimer.org)

**Health Department**

970.498.6775

**Division of Water Resources**

303.866.3581

**Assessors Office**

970.498.7050

**Clerk & Recorder**

970.498.7860

# Permitting and Inspections

## Permitting - Timeline & Clearance Requirements

Table 1. ALA Permitting Process

1. Begin by reviewing the checklist on page 6. Have any questions, or a unique circumstance? Contact the On-Call Planner at [planning@larimer.org](mailto:planning@larimer.org).
2. Submit a permit application with plans and specifications. The better the plans, the smoother the process!
3. A permit is created, plans reviewed to verify compliance. This review period can take **up to 5 weeks.**
4. If additional information is required, an email detailing those requirements will be sent.
5. Once review agencies sign off and permit tech review is done, an email with payment and issuance instructions will be sent.
6. Once payment is received the permit will be issued. You'll have **18 months to schedule inspections and complete construction.**



*Building Permit Website*



*Residential Building Permit*



*Community Development  
Online Portal*

## Permitting Fees

Building Permit Fees are calculated based on the value of the project. Table 2 depicts the cost of a building permit for projects that are valued \$25,000.01-\$500,000. Table 3 depicts electrical permitting fees for residential builds. Table 4 (pg. 09) shows other fees that a property owner may incur as they construct their ALA. All fees presented below are to be used to estimate a cost; circumstances may make each fee more or less expensive than represented here.

### Examples:

Total Valuation of the ALA is \$27,000.

- Use the \$25,000.01-50,000.00 fee calculation
- Cost would be:  $\$540.1901 + (13.8156 \times 2)$
- Total Building Permit Fee: \$567.8213

Total Valuation of the ALA is \$75,250.

- Use the \$50,000.01-100,000.00 fee calculation
- Cost would be:  $\$899.14 + (8.8696 \times 26)$
- Total Building Permit Fee: \$1,129.7496

Table 3. Electrical Permit Fees

Living Area	Fee
less than or equal to 1,000 sq. ft.	\$144
1,001-1,500 sq. ft.	\$198
1,501-2,000 sq. ft.	\$255
greater than 2,000 sq. ft.	\$255 + \$12 per additional 100 sq. ft.

Table 2. Building Permit Fees

Total Valuation	Fee
\$25,000.01 to \$50,000.00	\$540.1901 for the first \$25,000 (+) \$13.8156 for each additional \$1,000
\$50,000.01 to \$100,000.00	\$899.14 for the first \$50,000 (+) \$8.8696 for each additional \$1,000
\$100,000.01 to \$500,000.00	\$1,396.37 for the first \$100,000 (+) 7.2946 for each \$1,000



Table 4. Other Potential Fees

Wildfire Site Assessment	\$150
Plumbing & Mechanical	\$64.93*
Plan Review	50% of Building Permit Fee

*Fees vary based on property needs. Table 4 depicts some fees that you may need to consider.  
\*Plumbing and Mechanical fees will be more expensive if valued over \$2,000.00*



## Permitting Process FAQ

### **Q: When does my application expire?**

A: If a permit is not issued within 180 days of the application date, plans and other documents (such as the Utility Approval Form) expire and must be resubmitted. The Building Division may extend the deadline for an additional 90 days if an applicant provides a written request demonstrating why an extension is needed.

### **Q: What if I take longer than 18 months to construct my ALA?**

A: A one-time extension of the deadline may be granted by the Building Division for another 18 months - meaning the original permit is valid for three years. Beyond that, further extensions will require additional fees.

### **Q: What inspections do I need and how do I request them?**

A: All required inspections are listed, in order of completion, on the [Larimer County Building Inspections website](#). Call 970-498-7697 or use the [Online Portal](#) to request inspections.

### **Q: What if my plans change?**

A: Additional plan review will be required, and new approval from the Building Division. Additional fees will be associated with revised plans. New inspections may be necessary.

### **Q: What happens if I don't obtain a building permit?**

A: Constructing without a permit puts your property at risk, as well as the life & safety of you, your family, and community members. If caught, a life-safety inspection may need to be scheduled with Code Compliance staff. A penalty fee will be assessed up to or equal to the building permit fee for work commenced without obtaining the permit.

# Backyard Boost

## ALA Fee Waiver Program

Like many counties across the United States, Larimer County has an affordable housing shortage. Do you want to be a part of the solution? Larimer County is launching an exciting new ALA Fee Waiver Program called **Backyard Boost!** Larimer County's Backyard Boost program is a local special initiative supported by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). Through this program, you agree to rent your ALA at an affordable rate, and in return the County will waive permitting fees!

### What fees are waived?

**100%** of the following fees are waived:

Building Permit Fees: Building, Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing

Planning Review Fees: Plan Review, Plot Plan Review

Use Tax: Taxes collected by Larimer County

Transportation Capital Expansion Fees: Both Regional and County!



Backyard Boost Website

### This sounds great! How do I get involved?

Taking part in the Backyard Boost Program is simple. When you submit your ALA permit application, you'll include a Backyard Boost Fee Waiver application. Larimer County's Housing Liaison will meet with you to discuss the program and answer any questions you have. After your plans are reviewed and fees are calculated, you'll sign an affordability agreement with the County and build your ALA **with fees waived!**



### Backyard Boost FAQ

**Q: Does my ALA need to be rented affordably forever?**

A: No, the program only requires you to rent it at an affordable rate for 36 months.

**Q: How do I know if I'm charging an affordable rent?**

A: We'll do that work for you. The County will calculate a maximum monthly rent on a yearly basis. To give you an idea of what rent could be, the 2025 max rent for a studio was \$1,341.

**Q: I am planning on renting my ALA to a family member... can I still participate?**

A: In most cases, yes!

# Supportive Resources and Programming



## Housing Partners of Larimer

Are you new to being a landlord? Larimer County's Office of Housing Stability is here to support you. By joining [HPL's Property Partner Network](#), you can access financial incentives and property protection funds when you accept an HPL tenant referral. HPL connects local property owners with households seeking stable, safe housing and encourages flexible screening practices that help strengthen our community.

As an HPL Partner, you'll receive:

- Support from a dedicated landlord liaison and experienced housing staff
- Cash incentives ranging from \$250-1,000+ for reducing certain requirements for accepting a CJA referral or a tenant with rental assistance (HCV, VASH)
- Up to \$3,500 in damage reimbursement funds for added peace of mind

Join us in building a stronger community, one home at a time.

## Finding a Builder

Are you planning to hire a builder for your ALA project? To pull an ALA permit in Larimer County, you don't need to be a licensed contractor. However, many homeowners prefer to get the advise and expertise of a professional.



### Northern Colorado Home Builder's Association

An organization that brings together construction professionals who are dedicated to strengthening the residential construction industry. The NoCoHBA publishes a Membership Directory, where you can find local contractors who are members of the HBA. Scan the QR code to learn more.



### Larimer County Community Development Online Portal

Use the Community Development online portal to verify whether or not a contractor is licensed with Larimer County. Scan the QR code to login or register for an account, search records, estimate fees, and more!



## Financing a New ALA

*Looking for a way to finance your ALA project? Before you meet with a lender, understand your options. On pages 12 and 13, review some popular financing models, as well as some government resources.*

### Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC)

A **Home Equity Line of Credit**, or HELOC, is a revolving line of credit, similar to a credit card, except it's secured by your existing home. It typically has a variable interest rate, and you can borrow up to an approved credit limit.

Unlike a Home Equity Loan, you can only make payments on the amount you borrow, not the full credit line.

### Construction or Renovation Loans

A **construction loan** is a short-term loan used to fund the building or renovation of a home. Funds are typically released in stages as construction progresses, and interest rates are usually higher than those of traditional mortgages.

Once construction is complete, the loan may be paid off in full or converted into a mortgage, depending on the lender and your qualifications.

### Home Equity Loan

A **Home Equity Loan** (also called a second mortgage) is a loan secured by your existing home. It typically has a fixed APR and provides a lump-sum payment upfront. Most lenders limit borrowing to about 80% of your home's equity.

Repayment is usually made through fixed monthly payments over a set term.

### Cash-out Refinance

A **cash-out refinance** is a type of mortgage refinance loan that replaces your existing mortgage with a new one. Unlike a traditional refinance loan, however, a cash-out refinance loan lets you tap some of your home's equity in the form of a cash disbursement.

As a result, the new loan will be larger than the remaining balance on your existing mortgage.

# Financing a New ALA

## Government and State Incentives

Larimer County's **Backyard Boost** fee waiver program is designed to support affordable ALA development in unincorporated Larimer County. Check out page 10 for more details.

Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) and the Colorado Office of Economic Development designed ADU finance programs to support ALA development. Check out more information about them on [CHFA's ADU webpage](#).

## Personal Assets

Personal savings, or support from friends and family, can help provide funding for your construction project.

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## Have questions?

We're here to help! Reach out to the Community Development On-Call Planner below with questions about permitting or building. With questions about the Backyard Boost Program or Housing Partners of Larimer, reach out to the Housing Liaison in the Office of Housing Stability.

### Community Development, Planning Division

Email: [planning@larimer.org](mailto:planning@larimer.org)

Phone: (970) 498.7679

<https://www.larimer.gov/communitydevelopment>

### Lexi Valenti, Housing Liaison

Email: [valental@co.larimer.co.us](mailto:valental@co.larimer.co.us)

Phone: (970) 498.7379

<https://www.larimer.gov/housing>



*Want to schedule a 15-minute appointment with planning staff? Scan the QR Code or [visit this link to schedule an in-person or virtual meeting](#). These meetings are for general questions; walk-ins without an appointment may not be accommodated.*

# Links and Resources

Compiled below are the links we've used throughout this document, organized by topic. Please utilize if you are unable to scan the QR Codes. We've also provided links to pages with more detailed information about some of the topics covered in this toolkit, if you're interested in exploring more.

## Learn more about ALAs

*Links that provide more information about the content on page 2:*

- Larimer County's ALA Webpage: [https://www.larimer.gov/building/accessory\\_living\\_areas](https://www.larimer.gov/building/accessory_living_areas)
- Colorado General Assembly House Bill 1152, Accessory Dwelling Units: <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb24-1152>

## Permitting, Planning, and Building Codes

*Links below for information provided on pages 4-9:*

- Larimer County ALA Webpage (to view site standards): [https://www.larimer.gov/building/accessory\\_living\\_areas](https://www.larimer.gov/building/accessory_living_areas)
- Contacting the Planning Division: [planning@larimer.org](mailto:planning@larimer.org)
- Utility Approval Worksheet: <https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/ala-utility-approval.pdf>
- Interactive Zoning Map (to find your flood hazard zone): <https://www.larimer.gov/planning/zoning/map>
- Colorado Conservation Data Explorer (CODEX) Mapping Service: <https://codex.cnhp.colostate.edu/>
- Residential Capital Expansion Fees (TCEF, etc.): <https://www.larimer.gov/engineering/development-review/development-review/development-review-permits-and-fees/transportation-capital-expansion-fee-tcef>
- Larimer County's Building Codes: <https://www.larimer.gov/building/building/codes>
- Building Permit Applications: <https://www.larimer.gov/building/permits>
- Residential Building Permit Application Form: [https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/application\\_form\\_-\\_residential\\_\\_4.pdf](https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/application_form_-_residential__4.pdf)
- Community Development Online Portal: [https://onlineportal.larimer.org/EnerGov\\_Prod/selfservice#/home](https://onlineportal.larimer.org/EnerGov_Prod/selfservice#/home)
- Building Permit Fee Schedule: <https://www.larimer.gov/system/files/2025-09/2025%20Building%20Permit%20Fee%20Schedule.pdf>
- Larimer County Building Inspections Site: <https://www.larimer.gov/building/inspections>

# Links and Resources

## Supportive Resources and Programming

*Links below for information provided on page 11:*

- Housing Partners of Larimer: <https://www.larimer.gov/housing/hpl>
- Northern Colorado Home Builders Association: <https://www.nocohba.com/>
- Larimer County Community Development Online Portal:  
[https://onlineportal.larimer.org/EnerGov\\_Prod/selfservice#/home](https://onlineportal.larimer.org/EnerGov_Prod/selfservice#/home)

## Financing Resources

*Links below for information provided on pages 10, 12-13:*

- Backyard Boost Webpage: <https://www.larimer.gov/backyard-boost-ala-fee-waiver-program>
- Backyard Boost Application: <https://form.jotform.com/260746097214055>
- Colorado Housing and Finance Authority ADU Financing Programs:  
<https://www.chfainfo.com/accessory-dwelling-unit-adu-finance-programs>

***Not provided in the toolkit, but extra resources you may find helpful:***

- Building Code Handouts: <https://www.larimer.gov/building/codes>
- Site Plan Requirements & Sample: <https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/site-plan.pdf>
- Requesting an address for your ALA: [https://www.larimer.gov/it/gis/addressing?\\_gl=1%2Asrouoz%2A\\_ga%2AMjl5MDg4ODQ5LjE3NzY5NzQwMjY.%2A\\_ga\\_QNLMFKNV2P%2AczE3ODEwMzgyMTgkbzEwMiRnMSR0MTc4MTA0MjQ1NyRqMzkkbDAkaDA](https://www.larimer.gov/it/gis/addressing?_gl=1%2Asrouoz%2A_ga%2AMjl5MDg4ODQ5LjE3NzY5NzQwMjY.%2A_ga_QNLMFKNV2P%2AczE3ODEwMzgyMTgkbzEwMiRnMSR0MTc4MTA0MjQ1NyRqMzkkbDAkaDA)
- Basement Finish/Interior Alteration:  
[https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/2022/basement\\_finish\\_interior\\_alteration.pdf](https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/2022/basement_finish_interior_alteration.pdf)



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