

CITY OF LYNDEN

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Heidi Gudde – Planning Director

(360) 354-5532



Community Development Committee Meeting Agenda

City Hall - 300 Fourth Street

4:00 PM July 19, 2023

Roll Call

1. Introductions (if guests are present)

Approval of Minutes

- [2.](#) Community Development Committee Minutes of June 21, 2023

Discussion Items

- [3.](#) Amending LMC 19 re Patio Screening

- [4.](#) 2024 Budget Outlook

Next Meeting: August 23, 2023

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

4:00 PM June 21, 2023
2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

1. ROLL CALL

Council Members: Kyle Strengholt, Gary Bode, Mayor Scott Korthuis

Staff: John Williams, Heidi Gudde

Guests: Gary Vis

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Community Development Committee Meeting Minutes of 5/17/23 were approved as presented.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS - Special Events

Process Improvement for Special Events was discussed by the Committee. Williams introduced the topic and gave background information on this item as recently there have been calls to revise this process. The group reviewed the data collected by Dave Timmer including examples of how other cities are handling special events.

Common special events in the City – not including park rentals – are typically 5k races, business or restaurant events. Issues discussed included fees, type of events, closing streets, garbage collection, and insurance for events occurring on City property. Conclusions which came from the discussion:

- The committee discussed a threshold, such as 60 people, to trigger the requirement for a security plan when the application comes through.
- Arterial streets closed only for regional / community events (Farmers Day Parade) with approval of the City Council. Most collector /minor streets can be closed administratively for commercial events or block parties. These side streets can be closed administratively by City Administrator or his/her designee however, administrative closures in the HBD are limited to 4th between Front and Grover. Other street closures in the HBD and all arterials must go to Council for approval.

- Insurance requirements will be added to code with current rates. These currently appear on the application but are not mentioned in code. The group concluded that the Cit's insurance carrier could likely recommend an amount.
- No damage deposits supported by the Committee.
- No fee currently collected or supported by the Committee.
- Violations related to special event permits to be added to our civil penalties.
- Keep animal prohibition except true support animals.
- One application should collect all events for a given year from a single entity but no roll-over from year to year is supported. Annual permit is required.
- Keep dance permit separate from the special events permit.

Action Item: Use discussion notes to begin a redline draft of the new code section.

4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Update on Pending Annexations in Lynden were discussed.

Action Item: Town hall type of meeting recommended staff led with Mayoral support. Provide information about what annexation would mean for us.

- Recent Legislation on Parking requirements for Existing Mixed-use Projects

Gudde confirmed that the State of WA passed legislation which prohibits the city from requiring parking in certain circumstances. Specifically, when existing buildings, that are eligible for mixed-use provisions, convert from commercial to residential uses. The city's code is expected to reflect this change within 6 months of our 2025 Comp Plan Update.

The group asked if this included circumstances where the building is expanded. Gudde was not able to answer that definitively but noted that additional guidance on this legislation is expected from the Dept of Commerce later this summer.

Next Meeting Date: July 19, 2022

CITY OF LYNDEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



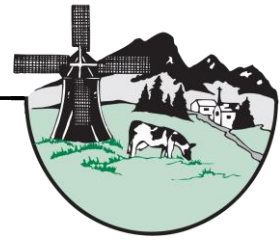
<u>Meeting Date:</u>	July 17, 2023
<u>Name of Agenda Item:</u>	Amending LMC 19 re Patio Screening
<u>Section of Agenda:</u>	Unfinished Business
<u>Department:</u>	Community Development Department
<u>Attachments:</u>	
Planning Commission and, Staff Memo regarding recommended action, Patio Heater Safety Handout, Blog Article re Patio Conversions, Commission Minutes of 5-11-23	
<u>Summary Statement:</u>	
<p>At the June 19th meeting the City Council considered an amendment to LMC 19.22 related to the screening of outdoor patio areas. At that meeting, testimony from one local contractor raised questions related to the ability to more fully enclose patio areas. The Council asked that the amendment be reconsidered to address this possibility and provide answers the issued raised. In response, additional information pertaining to this issue has been attached to this agenda item.</p> <p>Planning, Building, and Fire Dept staff continue to raise concerns related to the enclosing of patio areas that are attached to primary living areas and recommend screening rather than enclosing. Concerns focus on three main areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Life safety. 2. Enforcement and the potential for ad-hoc living spaces that violate building code. 3. Maintaining outdoor areas and separation of living spaces in single-family residential zones. <p>It is relevant to note that this potential amendment was raised after a single unpermitted enclosure was cited. The code, as currently written, is clear and well utilized throughout the city.</p> <p>Similar to staff, the Planning Commission considered this issue carefully and voted to recommend a clarification of code rather than a modification that would permit enclosure.</p> <p>Staff is recommending that the Council review the attached materials and provide direction to staff regarding this amendment. This action generally includes the following options (1) keep the code as written and take no action on the amendment, (2) adopt the amendment as previously proposed which allows for screening but not enclosing of patios, or (3) remand the issue back to staff or the Planning Commission with specific directions regarding next steps.</p>	
<u>Recommended Action:</u>	
Provide staff direction regarding the pending LMC amendment.	

CITY OF LYNDEN

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Heidi Gudde, Director

(360) 354 - 5532



July 12, 2023

To: City Council

RE: Enclosing Patios

Dear City Council,

This memo is written to provide you with background information related to a recent proposal to amend Chapter 19 of the Lynden Municipal Code related to the screening or enclosing of patios that are located within the rear yard of a single-family home. The reason this issue has come forward relates solely to one violation of the standard which was done knowingly at 950 Captain Bay Court. The current code has been utilized well and is clearly understood by staff, homeowners, and contractors in the city. The current standard is clear and compliance has not been an issue. The property owner at 950 Captain Bay Court and her contractor, Dale Assink, rather than come into compliance, have requested that the code be modified to allow unconditioned (non-heated) additions to homes within the rear setback.

Planning, Building, and Fire Dept staff have raised concerns about a potential change to the standard that would allow the addition of unconditioned spaces and/or the enclosure of patio areas that are attached to primary living areas. This is why the amendment presented to Council on June 19th was written as a clarification of the current standard rather than a modification that allowed enclosure. Concerns about enclosure focus on three topics:

1. Life safety.
2. Enforcement and the potential for ad-hoc living spaces that violate building code.
3. Maintaining outdoor areas and separation of living spaces in single-family residential zones.

Life safety concerns relate to dangers associated with carbon monoxide poisoning, increased fire risk, and egress. Outdoor grilling on patio spaces is common and with the rising popularity of smokeless fire pits even campfires have moved to patio spaces. In addition, a wide variety of patio heaters are available for consumers to extend the usability of their patio spaces. While all of these amenities make outdoor living spaces more enjoyable, they can become dangerous when used in an enclosed area. The example cited by Mr. Assink of the property at 950 Captain Bay Court (shown here) includes a gas grill inside a patio. This patio was fully enclosed with glass and overhead glass-paneled doors after a building permit for covering the patio was approved and finalized.

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Grilling in and heating enclosed spaces that are attached to a living space exposes the inhabitants of the house to serious dangers. Gas leaks, carbon monoxide poisoning, and

fires are concerning when the space is connected to the home and sleeping quarters. Even ash from a previous fire can quickly become a house fire when located in or near a residence.



Additionally, retrofitted enclosed patios may create access concerns. In the Captain Bay Court example, the patio does not have a man-door but only overhead doors as a means of egress. If the door connecting to the home was inadvertently locked and an individual or child is not able to open an overhead door, then the patio becomes a space without an exit.

Ad-hoc living areas becomes likely when patios are enclosed. Although unconditioned spaces such as garages and enclosed porches are not designed for living area, they are often the first spaces to be converted when a home's inhabitants are looking for additional room. The City of Lynden code accommodates the reality of garage conversions by requiring outdoor parking areas and including attached garages within a building envelope. Similarly, if the city allowed unconditioned enclosed patio spaces the stage is set for an expansion of living area and a reduction of yard space. A quick internet search shows many do-it-yourself examples of converting your covered patio to become an extension of your home. If a patio or porch is allowed to be enclosed as unconditioned space, then it's quite natural for it to evolve to heated (conditioned) space even if it was not constructed with this intent. The result is a space which is not built to code,



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likely not meet the energy code, and may be a liability to the owner and future owners of the home.

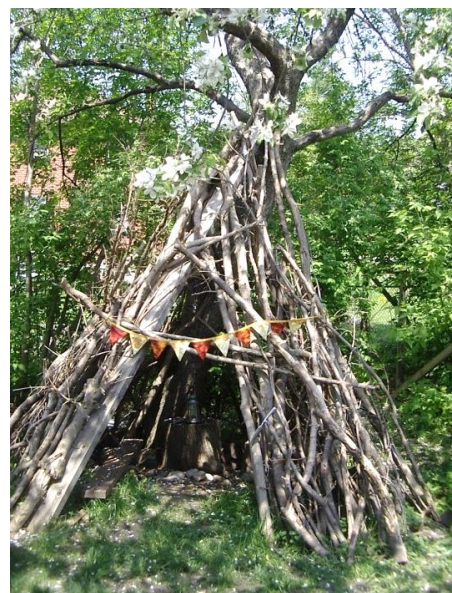


***Before:** Exterior view of an example of a covered patio as currently permitted within a rear yard.*



***After:** The same patio after enclosure. View from the interior after a conversion to an extension of living space.*

Yard area is compromised when outdoor spaces are enclosed. One of the benefits of traditional single-family zoning is open yard area associated with each home. Yards are created by minimum required setbacks associated with the primary residence. These limit how much of the lot can be covered by the primary structure. In most zones in the City of Lynden a rear yard setback is 30 feet with the setback for a covered, but open, patio set at 18 feet. These setbacks serve to maintain open area for recreational uses but also to create separation between living units.



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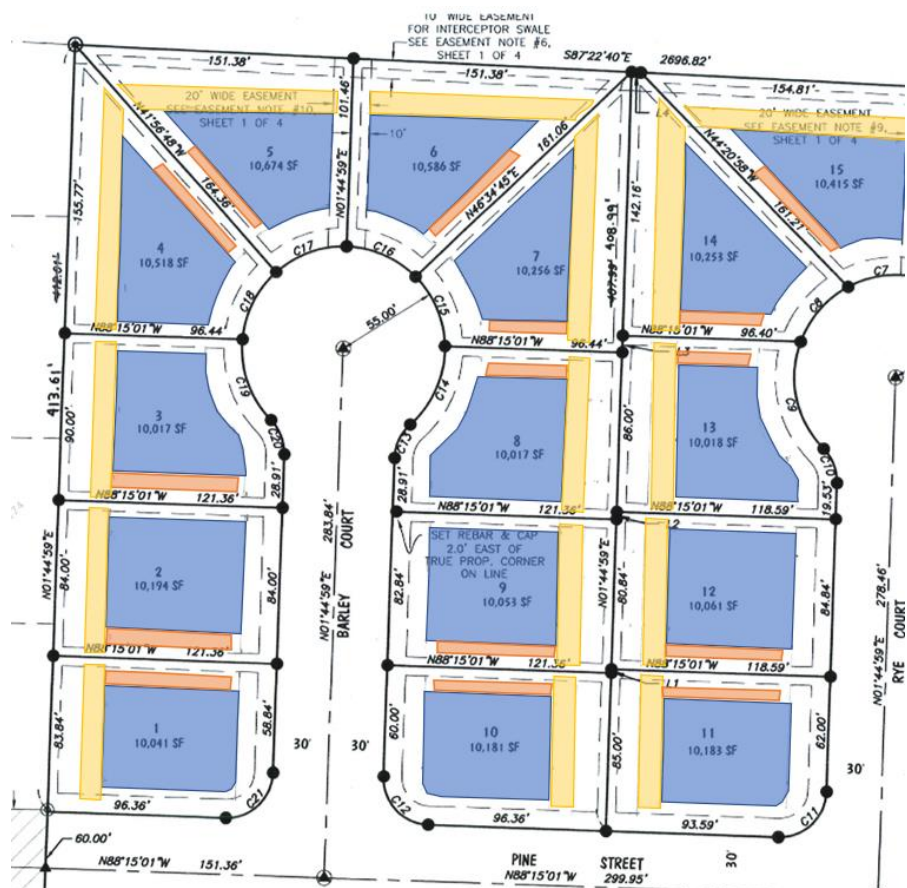
The City of Lynden has continually placed children and families as a top priority. Maintaining private and safe outdoor spaces for play, gardening, trees and plants for existing and future families is part of this legacy and becomes even more important when lots sizes are reduced due to development costs.

Unlike building codes and fire codes the setbacks associated with zoning are based somewhat on aesthetics but are not completely arbitrary as they consider typical lot sizes and the area remaining. If rear yards are compromised by enclosed extensions of the living space then open space is reduced. The map below shows the building envelope in blue and the area for potential encroachment (currently allowed as open covered patios) in yellow.

The orange area shows the permitted encroachment of garages into side yards. If the standard is changed to allow for enclosed space to cover both the blue and yellow areas you can see that a majority of the lot becomes built out.

- Current Home Envelope
- Permitted Garage Encroachment
- Permitted Covered but Open Patio Encroachment

Outdoor patio space is desirable and it is likely that after this homeowner completes their patio enclosure they will look to add additional covered but open patio space to their yard and continue to expand the built-out area on their lot. In other words, the first patio becomes enclosed and then a second, open patio, is attached to the first. This is essentially what is playing out with this request. In 2018, the City updated the code to allow "covered" patio space into the rear setback. Many people



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have since used this update and built their patios according to code. At the time of that update, there was significant discussion on how people would use the covered patio space and whether they would then start pushing to enclose that space. Five years later, this contractor is now pushing to enclose that space and reduce the rear setback.

At the June 19th meeting Mr. Assink noted that rear yards can include accessory structures which reduce open space. He showed the Council a sketch of an accessory structure which could cover the majority of his rear yard. Unfortunately, while this structure was shown with accurate setbacks the portrayal that it was a permitted structure was inaccurate. Accessory structures must meet height, lot coverage, and design standards. He is correct, that while aesthetically a detached accessory structure does fill up a property's open space, by code they are intended to be smaller, less imposing structures than the primary building.

Accessory structures can be constructed within rear yards, and these may include enclosed sheds or shops, greenhouses, or gazebos with open or glass walls. There is a demand for those types of separated, detached structure within the city. However, the character of a resident's activity in a detached accessory structure is different because these spaces are not an extension of the home. It is intentionally separate space that is used as an accessory to the living area rather than an expansion of the living area. As a result, if a fire danger or carbon monoxide risk is created in an enclosed accessory structure it does not pose the same threat to sleeping inhabitants as it would if connected immediately to living areas.



Accessory structures are usually added to a property after the initial build is completed and most additions are modest. If, however, the rear setback is modified to allow unconditioned spaces to expand from the primary structure then it is likely the new construction will include full build-out of this space as contractors take full advantage of the building envelope and build homes as large as they can be permitted – regularly bumping up against each edge of the building envelope. The result will be larger homes and neighborhood with less open yard space.

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We trust that this memo responds to the questions raised by Mr. Assink at the June 19th meeting. These issues were discussed at length at multiple Community Development Committee meetings as well as at the Planning Commission hearing – all of which Mr. Assink attended.

Although this issue may seem relatively minor when compared to larger land use issues, staff is concerned that it will have a significant impact on the character of the City's single-family neighborhoods. As a result, staff and the Planning Commission continue to recommend that the patios encroaching into rear yards remain open, outdoor spaces and not become enclosed extensions of the primary residence.

Sincerely,

Heidi Gudde, Community Development Director

Ted Brouwer, Building Official

Mark Billmire, Fire Department Chief

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PLANNING COMMISSION

Tim Faber, Chairman

(360) 354 - 5532



July 3, 2023

Dear Lynden City Council,

This letter is written at the request of City Administration and Planning Staff. It is meant to provide you with additional information related to the proposed amendment to LMC 19.22 regarding the screening of patios located with rear setbacks of single-family homes. This issue was brought to the Planning Commission for review and public testimony on May 11, 2023. I was Chair of this meeting and can provide additional insights into what consideration was made as the group came to the final recommendation.

At the May 11th meeting the Commission received comments from one contractor, Mr. Assink, and the property owner he is representing. Mr. Assink was very forthcoming in noting that he was granted a permit to cover his client's patio on Captain Bay Court but, after the permit was finalized, continued to enclose the patio with glass and overhead doors. He stated that he understood this was not permitted per code but was hoping he could influence a change by working beyond the scope of his permit.

The Commission agreed that Mr. Assink had created a beautiful sunroom. The group considered if a variance or waiver could be pursued for patios enclosed with quality construction techniques. Ultimately we decided that there were too many subjective variables and that granting variances could create inconsistencies between residences – the merit of which would be difficult to decipher in future years. Ultimately, while the Commission considered the testimony and the example that Mr. Assink brought forward, I encouraged the commission members to separate this one example from the larger issue.

The proposed code amendment requires that patios remain outdoor, open spaces. The Commission agreed that if code was revised to allow enclosure of patios it would lead to an expansion of living spaces in a way that is permanent and impactful to the character of our single-family neighborhoods. If the setback is changed we, can and should expect that many homeowners will be enclosing their patios, and creating safety hazards... thinking they can still barbecue in a glass enclosed space, by maybe opening a window or two... heaters likely could be installed in retrospect to make the space more comfortable, with no regard to meeting energy codes etc...

The group discussed options by which a patio could become enclosed yet feel as if it was open and outdoor space. This led to a discussion about the potential difficulties with regulating glass and glazing. The group discussed different types of glazing that can be utilized noting that most window have some tint and glazing can even be mirrored and reflective and then loses it's open and transparent nature. It was concluded that sunroom spaces could be permitted per the

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code but should be included within the current setbacks. Backyard setbacks are provided to encourage private outdoor family activity space, privacy and creating a "green corridor" landscaping or the ability to see distant vistas. If we allow patios that encroach the rear yard setbacks, or in essence reduce the rear yard setbacks, this has the potential of blocking neighbors views if tinted or reflective glass is used.

Discussion of setbacks led to a discussion of accessory structures which are permitted within rear yards. The Commission understands that a property owner is able to create accessory structures that could "fill up" a back yard, reduce yard space, and eliminate the "openness" between homes. Mr. Assink pointed out that the code would allow him to build a sunroom that was detached from the home but not attached to the home. When asked why he didn't he stated that it was because he wanted it to be part of the home. The Commission generally concluded that bringing living spaces closer to each other is different than constructing unoccupied accessory structures.

Commission Conclusions: Key considerations for the Planning Commission related to maintaining outdoor spaces in our single-family zones and the separation of living spaces. The Commission was not in favor of reducing rear yard setbacks and increasing the area occupied by a home. The Commission discussed different methods by which enclosed patios could still look and feel like outdoor spaces such as glass panels, but ultimately concluded that enclosing the space would lead to an expansion of living space because of glazing techniques and numerous options available for heating the space. A homeowner can still construct and enjoy a space like this with proper planning and designing a space like this within the current setbacks.

We discussed the possibility of a variance for some high-quality projects but decided that too many subjective variables would be at play, and it would be difficult to develop a criteria by which some homeowners would be able to expand their homes into the rear yards and others would not. This, the Commission concluded, would ultimately lead to a revision in setbacks as you would need to allow everyone to do what you allow for one. The commission was not in favor of reducing setbacks, as not everyone would take advantage of using that reduced setback for an enclosed deck or sun room traditionally homeowners build their homes to the setback and the process starts all over again... even closer to the back fence.

As it related to Mr. Assink's project the group concluded that the patio, as permitted per the approved building permit, would remain a very useful and beautiful space even without glass enclosure and overhead doors.

This is how the Commission came to the recommendation to clarify code to allow for flexible screening options and railings but no enclosure of covered patio spaces that are located within rear yards. Planning Commission believes allowing the enclosure of decks will open a pandoras

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box to allow many different types of fenestrations to be used, reducing neighborhood aesthetics if not regulated appropriately, reduce open greenspace corridors and neighbor's backyard privacy.

I understand that council may request the planning commission to re-consider this proposed code amendment. I would ask that if this is the case, that council clearly identifies the reason(s) for this re-consideration. I think it would be good for the planning commission to hear thoughts on how the concerns noted above could be mitigated.

Thank you for considering our conclusions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Faber'.

Tim Faber
Planning Commission Chairman

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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LMC 19.22.030 – Residential architecture and attached garages.

Current Lynden Municipal Code Chapter 19.22.030(E)

E. Porches, Stoops, Decks, and Patios.

1. Porches and Stoops.

- a. Architecture of the primary pedestrian entrances must include cover from the elements. Eave overhang alone does not constitute cover.
- b. Steps used to access front porches or stoops must be complimentary to the primary structure through the use of coordination materials or architectural elements.
- c. Stairs with open risers are not permitted on front porches or stoops.

2. Decks and Patios.

- a. Uncovered wood decks and raised concrete patios not over twenty-four inches above grade at any point may be permitted within eighteen feet of the rear property line and five feet of the side property line.
- b. Roof structures covering decks or patios are permitted within the rear setback provided that the structure:
 - i. Remains open on three sides and is not enclosed in any way;
 - ii. Does not come within eighteen feet of the rear property line;
 - iii. Does not encroach more than two feet into the side yard setbacks of the underlying zone; and,
 - iv. The addition does not exceed the permitted lot coverage.
- c. Deck or patio privacy screening or fencing which is located more than six feet from the property line, may be up to eighty-four inches in height above the lowest grade. Privacy screening of a deck or patio which is located on a property line is subject to maximum fence height of six feet above grade.

(Ord. No. 1657, § C(Exh. A), 12-19-2022)

19.22.030 Residential architecture and attached garages.

E. Porches, Stoops, Decks, and Patios.

1. Definitions.

- a. Covered Patio means a single-story shade structure covering a patio or deck area consisting of a solid or open roof and structural supports, attached to or detached from the primary dwelling. Covered patios must serve exclusively for recreational purposes, never used as a carport, garage, storage room, or habitable living space.
- b. Patio Screen is a structure or material used to protect a recreational area from sun, insects, wind, or visual intrusion. A patio screen differs from a window covering in that it is exposed to outdoor elements like heat or cold.

2. Porches and stoops.

- a. Architecture of the primary pedestrian entrances must include cover from the elements. Eave overhang alone does not constitute cover.
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 - i. Remains open on three sides and may not be enclosed in any way;
 - ii. Does not come within eighteen feet of the rear property line;
 - iii. Does not encroach more than two feet into the side yard setbacks of the underlying zone; and,
 - iv. The addition does not exceed the permitted lot coverage.
 - v. Safety railings may enclose a patio or deck on all three sides. Railings are limited to a maximum height of 42 inches measured from the patio floor to the top of the railing.
- c. Patio screening that is attached to the patio structure may include insect screens, sunshades, and windscreens that:
 - i. Are not structurally framed in or sealed;
 - ii. Are not load bearing;
 - iii. Do not include rigid framed window or doors of any kind;

- iv. Are easily removable.
 - v. Utilize materials that are air permeable to allow for ventilation of the space.
- d. Freestanding deck or patio privacy screening or fencing which is located more than 6 feet from the property line and not attached to the primary structure, may be up to eighty-four inches in height above the lowest grade. Privacy screening of a deck or patio which is located on a property line is subject to maximum fence height of six feet above grade.
- (Ord. No. 1582, § A, 6-3-2019)



Remodeling Your Home With An Enclosed Porch Conversion

If your family is growing and you find that you need additional space, if your home has an enclosed porch, you're in luck! Converting your three-season porch into a finished heated room can not only provide you with the space you need, but it can also be a simpler and more cost-effective way to gain that extra room!

Remodeling your porch offers plenty of advantages. First, since it's already existing, there is no loss of yard space like you'd have with an addition. Plus, you'll have fewer zoning issues as it's an existing structure, and much of the structural work is already in place.

Assessing Your Existing Porch



This 4-season, heated & cooled sunroom, started as the back screened porch on a home. The old porch was removed, and totally re-built on top of the original foundation.



A screened porch was demo'd and a 4-season sunroom with a 16' Andersen patio door installed in this contemporary porch conversion project.

You have many options when remodeling your porch. There are a couple of concerns that you should speak with your design-build remodeler about. First, you want to make sure that remodeling your porch will not detract from the

style of your home. This is especially important if you're enclosing a porch on some bungalows or Victorians, as it can affect the home's much sought after charm. Your design-build contractor can work with you to make sure that your new structure will be architecturally compatible.

Side porches can easily be converted into a home office, play space for the kids or a den/family room. If your porch is located on the rear of your house, it's ideal for adding space for an extended kitchen. With new insulation and energy efficient windows, and porch can be converted into a light-filled Florida room (a sunroom or 3-season room) that can provide you with plenty of year-round enjoyment.

You'll need to examine the existing structure before you start. While much of the infrastructure may be in place, you will need to carefully consider the foundation to make sure that it's capable of supporting the finished structure. Also, you need to consider the cost of:



A 3-season room connected to the home with a folding hinged patio door, it uses a gas fireplace for occasional winter heating.

- **Insulation:** Insulating walls and ceilings may be necessary. How much and what type of insulation you use depends in part on the existing structure and your planned use for the space.
- **Replacement Windows:** Your design-build contractor can determine if the existing window frames are usable, which can reduce costs. Remember to match your homes existing windows to make sure your new porch fits into your homes architectural style.
- **Plumbing:** The location of your new room to existing plumbing will significantly

impact the difficulty and cost of installing plumbing if needed.

Electrical: If electrical service exists on your existing porch, you may still need to update your electrical service to meet your local building codes.

- **Drywall, flooring, and millwork**

- **Heating and Cooling:** This is an important consideration. While your home may have systems that can easily accommodate an additional room, you may need to supplement the HVAC for this room. Baseboard heating could be one option, however, although it's easy to install, baseboard heating can be expensive to operate on an ongoing basis. Consider adding a fireplace, pellet stove, or wood stove for heat. New models are efficient, look great, and can quickly heat a large space during our cold Madison, Wisconsin winters.

Even with these elements in the mix, converting an existing porch into a usable space can be more cost-effective than adding an addition to gain usable space.

Avoiding Some Common Pitfalls



This screened porch was converted to a 3-season room with a fireplace, the perfect way to enjoy the pool and backyard view!

While enclosing your porch to create usable space is a cost-effective solution there are a couple of pitfalls you'll need to watch out

for. Here in Madison, Wisconsin our winters can be particularly harsh. Your design-build contractor will understand the local weather conditions and take these into account when designing your space. Insulation and energy efficient windows are an important consideration here in Madison, and if you're planning on connecting your new room to your home, you'll need to make sure that it is as energy efficient as the rest of your home.

The foundation is another area that is critical when it comes to converting your porch into usable space. The depth of your foundation must be able to handle the additional weight of the porch's roof, walls, and windows, Failure to

properly inspect the foundation can result in leaking or failure. Often, a porch's foundation will be shallower than your house's foundation. Adding to the structure without proper foundation prep can result in cracking in both the foundation and the roof where it meets the house. This can end up costing you big money for repairs and may affect your ability to sell at a later date.

Finally, the building codes dictate improvement projects like enclosing a porch. Your design-build contractor should be up to date on all of your local building codes and will take care of permitting and building inspections. You need to be prepared for some additional costs. Local building codes require permits for any updates to electrical, plumbing, and HVAC. Failure to follow building codes can result in your home being unsellable in the future.

Remodeling your porch and creating additional living space can add value and functionality to your home. Make sure that you discuss your project thoroughly with your design-build contractor before construction begins. They can help you to create a space that will seamlessly match your home's existing architecture and can provide you with all the additional space your family needs!

View our Porch Design Projects

- **Front & Back Ranch Home Porch Additions** - [Extending The Living Space Into The Outdoors](#)
- **Three Season Porch Renovation** - [A Cathedralized Ceiling Porch Remodel in Nakoma, Madison](#)
- **Two Story Porch Solution** - [A Small Deck is Remodeled Into a Screened In Three Season Addition](#)
- **Screen Porch To Sunroom** - [A DeForest, Wisconsin Screen Porch Is Remodeled Into A Sunroom Addition](#)



This article was updated by Abe Degnan on 11/1/2022.

Degnan Design-Build-Remodel



OUTDOOR HEATER SAFETY

Many restaurants, schools, offices, and other businesses have been using outdoor spaces to stay open and running amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As temperatures begin to drop, portable outdoor appliances are increasingly being used to heat outdoor areas, particularly those where it is too cool to comfortably sit or stand. Restaurants with outdoor seating areas, in particular, are relying on heaters to extend the outdoor dining season as long as possible. This fact sheet includes information to help ensure that propane heaters and electric heaters for outdoor heating are used safely and in accordance with NFPA® 1, *Fire Code* (2018 edition).

Propane Patio Heaters **For More:** See NFPA 1, Subsection 69.3.13

For patio heaters that use integral LP-Gas containers with a capacity greater than 1.08 lb (0.49 kg), NFPA 1 requires that the heaters be listed by an organization acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

Propane heaters need to be used in accordance with their listing and manufacturer instructions. Prior to using a propane heater, refer to the manufacturer's instructions for information such as the following:

- Necessary clearances from the heating element
- Proper ventilation required
- Proper inspection, cleaning, and maintenance procedures
- Lighting and shutdown procedures
- Where the heater can and cannot be used (for example, heaters cannot be used in enclosed locations)
- Procedures for properly storing heaters

The restrictions for using propane heaters are also based on the occupancy in which they are used. For example, in assembly occupancies, such as restaurants with 50 or more occupants, heaters cannot be located within 5 ft (1.5 m) of the exits.

Regardless of where they are used, if a heater uses propane hoses, they must be as short as possible, visible, and protected from damage.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 ft (1 m) away from heating equipment.
- Turn off all portable heaters when the area in which they are used is not occupied.

In addition, the installation, modification, and maintenance of a fixed liquid propane system needs to be performed by a qualified person in accordance with NFPA® 58, *Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code*.

Storage of Propane Cylinders **For More:** See NFPA 1, Section 69.5

Where propane heaters are used, special attention must be paid to ensure that the cylinders are stored properly when not in use. NFPA 1 requires the following:

- Cylinders must not be stored inside a building.
- Cylinders in storage must be placed in a location with minimal potential for physical damage, tampering, or exposure to excessive temperature increases.
- Cylinders must not be stored on the roof.

Additionally, cylinders that are stored outside must be located a minimum of:

- 5 ft (1.5 m) away from any doorway or opening in a building frequented by the public where occupants have at least two means of egress



OUTDOOR HEATER SAFETY *CONTINUED*

- 10 ft (3 m) away from any doorway or opening in a building or section of a building that has only one means of egress
- 20 ft (6.1 m) away from any automotive service station fuel dispenser

Electric Patio Heaters

For More: See NFPA 1, Section 11.1, & Subsection 11.5.3

Portable electric heaters must be placed in locations where they cannot be easily overturned. The heaters must also be listed by a qualified electrical testing laboratory.

Electric heaters need to be used in accordance with their listing and manufacturer instructions. Prior to using an electric heater, refer to the manufacturer's instructions for information such as the following:

- Necessary clearances from the heating element
- Installation and wiring requirements
- Proper inspection, cleaning, and maintenance procedures

The use of electric heaters also requires special attention as to how they are powered. Some of the power restrictions include the following:

- Electric heaters should be used only where they can be plugged directly into the appropriate receptacles or extension cords of adequate current capacity.
- Multiplug adapters and extension cords must not be used in place of permanent wiring.
- Extension cords must be plugged directly into an approved receptacle, power tap, or multiplug adapter and must, with the exception of approved multiplug extension cords, serve only one portable appliance.

- Extension cords must be grounded when servicing grounded portable appliances.
- Extension cords must be maintained in good condition without splices, deterioration, or other damage.
- For installations that are not deemed temporary structures, extension cords and flexible cords cannot be affixed to structures; extended through walls, ceilings, floors, or under doors or floor coverings; or be subjected to environmental or physical damage.

This information is intended to clarify the major requirements for outdoor heaters to help ensure that heating appliances are being used properly. Facility managers and owners must check with the AHJ for specific requirements and final approval.



Learn More

As the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, NFPA continues to provide key resources and information addressing emergency planning, building, and fire and life safety issues. New resources are being added as the crisis evolves and challenges emerge.

- ▶ Visit [nfpa.org/coronavirus](https://www.nfpa.org/coronavirus) to access the latest NFPA resources.
- ▶ Get free digital access to NFPA 1 at [nfpa.org/1](https://www.nfpa.org/1).



The 9 Best Smokeless Fire Pits for Every Outdoor Gathering

Creating a cozy and inviting outdoor space is easier than you think.

BY [RACHEL KLEIN](#), [BRADLEY FORD](#) AND [DANNY PEREZ](#) PUBLISHED: APR 21, 2023



Trevor Raab

Most likely, you want a [fire pit](#) that [adds ambiance](#) to your outdoor space, provides warmth on chilly evenings, and maybe even grills up some tasty meals. What you don't want is a ton of smoke that leaves your eyes watering and your clothes smelling like a weekend camping trip. What you're looking for is a smokeless fire pit.

These modern appliances safely contain fire, foster complete combustion of your fuel with minimal smoke, and come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit your outdoor décor. While smokeless fire pits for your backyard are a relatively recent development, smokeless fires have been burning for years.

Native Americans employed the Dakota Fire Hole to create hot fires that would burn in windy conditions and not spread. It consisted of two holes in the ground

connected by a tunnel: building a fire in one hole causes the rising heat to draw cool air through the tunnel from the other hole. This constant flow of air fueling the fire creates a hot fire that burns close to 100 percent of the wood—similar to the modern smokeless fire pits that pull air from the bottom or size to fuel your fire and leave a minimum mess.

The Best Smokeless Fire Pits

BEST OVERALL

1



Breeo X Series 24 Smokeless Fire Pit

\$599 AT HOME DEPOT

[Read more](#)

BEST BUDGET

2



Inno Stage Smokeless Fire Pit

\$84 AT AMAZON

[Read more](#)

EASIEST TO CLEAN

3



Tiki Patio Fire Pit

\$395 AT AMAZON

[Read more](#)

BEST MID-SIZE

4



Solo Stove Bonfire 2.0 Smokeless Fire Pit

\$345 AT AMAZON

[Read more](#)

BEST RUSTIC STYLE

5

**Titan Great Outdoors Steel Near-Smokeless Fire Pit**

\$270 AT AMAZON

[Read more](#)

SHOW MORE

What to Consider

First, manage your expectations regarding smokeless fire pits. While good ones are nearly completely smokeless visually, they still produce exhaust gasses so expect some of that campfire smell, especially if it's breezy. For the same reason, you might occasionally get a face full of invisible smoke if you're in the wind.

Keep in mind, not all smokeless fire pits are safe to use on decks or other combustible surfaces, so consider buying a heat shield or [fire pit mat](#).

Most smokeless fire pits burn wood. You'll want to use seasoned wood—that means it has had time to dry out over six or more months. Wood that's still green or wet will burn more slowly and may produce smoke even if you use it in a smokeless fire pit.

Some models, like the [Tiki](#) we tested, are also designed to burn wood pellets. Whatever fuel you use, you'll burn through it more quickly in a smokeless fire pit due to the constant stream of air feeding the fire. The upside of this is that, when the wood burns this hot and completely, you have less ash to clean up.

How We Selected

We first examined a range of smokeless fire pits we wanted to test in person and those we wanted to further research based on other expert reviews. We loaded them with seasoned oak firewood and started fires in each of our test units, gauging how easy they were to load and feed to maintain a continuous burn.

Once they were burning, we walked toward each pit until we could feel noticeable heat, then circled them to see how even the distribution was and how much it was affected by wind. We also looked at them through a Flir infrared camera to see if there were any concerning hot spots on the fire pits' bodies.

Lastly, we let the fires burn down to ash so we could determine how easy clean-up was after the blaze. We also noted things like whether or not the pits were easy to carry or move around, as well as their weight and dimensions.

Some of these fire pits—the Titan and Blue Sky models—we haven't had the chance to test yet. We evaluated them based on their features, reviews that customers have left on retailer sites, and the experience and insights we've gleaned from using similar pits. They're promising enough to warrant inclusion here and give you more options for fitting the fire pit in with your home. Read on for our reviews and right now, there's a [flash sale on Solo Stove smokeless fire pits](#) just in time for [Father's Day](#).

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CITY OF LYNDEN



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Heidi Gudde, Planning Director
(360) 354 - 5532

Planning and Community Development Department Budget Memo

To: Community Development Committee

From: Heidi Gudde, Director

Date: July 19, 2023

As we approach budget planning for the 2024 year the Planning and Community Development Department is looking ahead to some of our biggest projects and expenses which are shown in overview here and additionally described in a subsequent memo to the Committee.

Project / Expense	Notes re Associated Expenses	Outside Funding Available
Tracking Software	Initial integration \$45,000-\$180,000. Recurring maintenance \$24,000-\$75,000 annually Likely utilized by multiple departments at the city.	Yes – grants from the Dept of Commerce
Comp Plan Periodic Update	Coordination with Whatcom County \$20,000 – \$23,000. Scope of work for outside consultants will be developed in the following months. Costs associated with County can be covered by our grant allocation.	Yes - \$125,000 already set aside from the State for Lynden
Public Interface through Online Updates	Staff time is the biggest component to improving public interface re ongoing development projects. These tasks are included in the new Admin Assistant position funded in 2023. This position is currently filled by a temp until new Permit Tech completes 'try-on' period through the end of 2023.	No – but potentially a feature of the new software
Staffing and Training	2024 request will likely be significantly increased from previous years as renewed focus on training opportunities after COVID restrictions lifted. Also, new staff and new software will require training. \$10,000 between both Planning and Building divisions.	None identified at this time
Relocation of Code Compliance Services	Budget year for this is unidentified and expenses are undetermined at this time, but it would include modifications to City Hall to create office space and replacement vehicle. Code compliance will be a significant user of the new software.	No – if the role shifts from the PD some associated expenses will also shift.