



City of Ketchum

News Release

December 10, 2014

Ketchum: Greener, Safer City With Building Code Updates

Ketchum will be a greener, safer city under proposed building code updates that go before the City Council Monday, Dec. 15, at 5:30 p.m.

New construction would have to be about 15 percent more energy-efficient, and improved firewalls would increase safety for both residents and firefighters.

Energy-efficiency measures would result in long-range savings. It takes an average of about six years to pay back the added costs in most of Idaho, but likely less than two years in Ketchum because of its colder climate and high-quality construction, said Rebecca Bundy, senior planner.

In the United States, she noted, buildings account for 40 percent of energy consumption, a greater percentage than any other sector. Buildings also account for 14 percent of potable water consumption.

Exterior energy consumption by such features as driveway snow-melting systems and swimming pools has been largely unregulated, Bundy pointed out, and presents an opportunity for significant savings.

These are among the proposed changes:

1. Snow-melting systems that cover more than 50 square feet would need to offset their energy consumption by installing renewal energy systems such as solar or geothermal.
2. Two-hour fire separation walls would be required in two-family dwellings and townhouses. One-hour walls may be allowed as exceptions now.
3. Commercial buildings would be required to have low-flow faucets and fixtures, as well as improved fire sprinkler and fire alarm systems.

Changes in the floodplain ordinances adopted earlier this year already are saving Ketchum homeowners money, she said. Flood insurance premiums reflect the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System, based in part on applicable ordinances. Ketchum and Boise have the best ratings in the state, and the new ratings are saving residents 20 percent on flood insurance, she said.

Proposed changes to city law also would prohibit the possession of fireworks without a commercial fireworks display permit. Fire and police officials have faced a dilemma in that it now is legal to possess fireworks but not to use them. This has meant that they cannot take action unless they see someone actually igniting fireworks.

"We had two fires started by fireworks in the Wood River Valley last summer," Fire Chief Mike Elle said. "This should make enforcement easier and, in turn, help prevent fires."

The state of Idaho requires the city to bring its building codes into compliance with state-adopted updates to the 2012 International Building Codes by Jan. 1, 2015. The proposed changes do so, as well as set stricter requirements in some areas.

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About the City of Ketchum: The City of Ketchum is located in the Wood River Valley in south central Idaho. Founded in 1880 during the mining boom, Ketchum is now regarded as one of the most popular destinations for winter and summer visitors due to its world-class skiing, mountain biking, fishing, hiking, restaurants, art galleries and shopping. The City of Ketchum hosts the famous annual Wagon Days Parade, held on Labor Day weekend, and numerous other year-round attractions. Ketchum is home to more than 10,000 full- and part-time residents. For more information about the City of Ketchum, visit www.ketchumidaho.org.

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