TOUR
LARAMIE & ALBANY COUNTY, WYOMING

WEST SIDE STORIES
NEIGHBORHOOD TOUR & CELEBRATION

www.visitlaramie.org - 1-800-445-5303
WELCOME!

The West Side is a neighborhood of bridges—the Curtis Street Bridge, the Clark Street Bridge, the Pedestrian Bridge, the Garfield Street Bridge, even the Greenbelt bridges.

No other neighborhood in Laramie is so absolutely defined as the West Side. It’s bounded on the east by the railroad tracks, on the west by the river and the interstate, on the south by Spring Creek, and on the north by Curtis Street. As much as these are geographical markers, they are cultural. And at its heart is the old Lincoln School.

The West Side has its own rich and distinctive history that contributes significantly to the larger patterns of history in Laramie, in Wyoming, and in the West. Many early Laramie City laborer dwellings and small businesses were centered here on the West Side—boarding houses, section houses, cafes and grocery stores. Prisoners at the Wyoming Territorial Prison made bricks and built houses on the prison grounds.

Today, many Laramie residents choose to live in the “other tree area.” They enjoy trains in their backyards, neighbors on very small lots, and a mixed use residential/industrial neighborhood. The West Side is close to downtown yet on the way to Woods Landing and Centennial.

Here, choices have been made to stay with our roots or to sink new ones into this land between the tracks and the river. Here you find the kept-up and the unkempt, the tacky and the elegant, older generations and young families, different kinds of people and people who are kind of different.

Welcome to the West Side!

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This tour is designed for bicycle or automobile travel, although much of it is suitable for a leisurely stroll on a pleasant day. The map on the inside of the back cover (page 17) will help you with your route.
Begin at the corner of Cedar and Ivinson, heading east on Ivinson.

1 LINCOLN COMMUNITY CENTER
365 W. GRAND AVENUE

For almost 100 years, there was a school in the West Side neighborhood. First there was the white clapboard West Side School, built in 1883. In 1924, the brick with tiled roof Lincoln School was constructed, and then expanded in 1939 and 1953.

Over the years, the Lincoln School served a small, blue-collar neighborhood, separated from the rest of Laramie by railroad tracks. As the sole public facility here, it was used for vaccinations and health screenings, plays, dances, dinners, and a polling site. Today it is a West Side institution.

When the school district closed the school in 1978, a grass-roots effort to create a community center here began almost immediately. A large-scale restoration effort now underway by the non-profit Lincoln Community Center, Inc. will allow the doors to be opened once again as a community gathering place for social, recreational, and cultural activities and a wide variety of community services. The Lincoln School is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Drive east one block to Pine and turn right (south).

2 SWEDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH
201 S. PINE

Built in 1885, this is one of the oldest surviving churches in Wyoming. Originally, services were conducted in Swedish. In 1885 there were about 250 Scandinavians in Laramie, and in 1885 there were about 250 Scandinavians in Laramie and the church served the entire Scandinavian community, including Norwegians and Danes.

The congregation was quite specific that the building would be of traditional Scandinavian design. Behind the church to the east is the parsonage, built in 1893.

In 1926, a new Lutheran church was completed at 7th and Ivinson; in 1931 the old church was sold, yet it has continued to serve as a house of worship through the years.

Whether it is viewed from the West Side or its steeple is glimpsed from across the tracks downtown, the church remains a beloved Laramie landmark.

Drive south two blocks to Garfield.
Since the 1930s, this steel-riveted Warren truss pedestrian bridge has connected the West Side with downtown.

For those crossing from the West Side, the pedestrian bridge gives quick, scenic, and healthy access to the shops, restaurants, Farmer’s Market and special events of downtown. It provides “East Siders” with walking and cycling access to the Laramie River Greenbelt. Locals and tourists alike enjoy the great simple pleasure of watching trains and sunsets from atop the pedestrian bridge on summer evenings.

The Lincoln Community Center was instrumental in landscaping the west end landing.

Continue south two blocks to Kearney and turn right (west). Drive one block west to Cedar and park; walk a block west for a closer view of the Clyde Garcia House.

4 CLYDE GARCIA HOUSE
468 KEARNEY

This house predates the founding of Laramie and, as you look west on Kearney from Cedar, appears to stand in the middle of the street. The building was here long before there was a street, and even now it is listed in county records by Township, Tract and Section, not Block and Lot as in the rest of the city.

A report for the Laramie Historic Neighborhoods Coalition gives the name of Jans Gjoup as the landowner in the 1860s. It is also known as the Old Carroll house. It is of frame construction with adobe bricks between the framing. Square nails were used. Most likely the dwelling was built as a ranch house and originally included a large parcel of land which was sold off over the years.

Around 1992 the property and buildings were sold to Clyde Garcia, who was born and raised in the next house south.

Turn right on to Cedar and drive north one block to Custer, then west (left) one block to Spruce.
Laramie River Greenbelt
Access from the Optimist Park Trailhead, Spruce and Garfield

The Laramie River Greenbelt is an ecological and recreational treasure. The Greenbelt preserves biodiversity, provides habitat for wildlife and improves the water quality of the Laramie River. In 2003 the Greenbelt corridor was designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and Audubon Wyoming.

A 1.25-mile loop at the south end skirts the site of the old Baxter Tie Plant, where railroad ties were produced. After an initial large-scale cleanup in the 1990s, the Union Pacific planted trees, shrubs, and grasses for the long-term “phytoremediation” of soils and groundwater through the plants’ root systems and leaves.

The Greenbelt is managed by the City of Laramie Parks and Recreation Department, with participation from Laramie citizens and civic organizations.

Optional detour – To continue this tour as a bicycle ride or long walk, take the Greenbelt north from the west side of Optimist Park to the UW School of Education mile marker, exit onto N. Cedar, proceed to the old refinery, then complete the tour from north to south.

See map for directions to Knight Oil (stop 6) at Cedar and Grand Ave.

Knight Oil and Hartman Distributing
302 S. Cedar

Knight Oil has been doing business at this location since 1977. Hartman Distributing has shared the space since the early 1990s. Knight Oil is a bulk distributor of Exxon fuel and Hartman is a bulk distributor of Conoco. Both sell to ranches and other businesses.

This 1925 building is a classic example of early 20th century commercial architecture. It has housed a brick yard, lumber yard, gas station and the Farm Bureau Co-op Association. The row of connected buildings to the south also contained businesses, including a gas station and the Westside Market.

Continue north on Cedar for one and one-half blocks.
An affinity with nature was a hallmark of the bungalow ideal, as expressed in this Cedar Street garden.

First known as a “bangla”, bungalows originated in the British colonies in India in the late 17th century. The style derived from thatched Bengali huts possibly crossed with hip-roofed peasant huts called “chauyari” (meaning four-sided) and then crossed again with the standard British Army tent. By 1825 the word bungalow was used by the English to mean a low house surrounded by a verandah.

Arts and Crafts-style bungalows were made famous by Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, the brothers behind a turn-of-the-century Pasadena, California, architectural firm. The bungalow’s popularity grew out of a reaction to Victorian excess and the Industrial Revolution.


When August Spiegelberg, a German immigrant, settled on the West Side in 1888, he started a family dynasty of builders renowned throughout the state. On Cedar Street, the Spiegelbergs left a legacy of beautifully constructed bungalows. Today, a “Spiegelberg House” is synonymous with quality and craftsmanship.

Bungalows were built in Laramie from approximately 1905 to 1930. Good examples are at 107, 113, 115 and 120 S. Cedar. These were built between 1911 and 1929.

The two-story house at 151 N. Cedar is not a bungalow. Oral history tells us that it was shipped by train to Laramie as a Sears kit. It was constructed on this site in 1910.

NOTE: North/south street numbers change at University. North blocks are 150, 250, etc.; south are 100, 200, etc. Extensions of Grand, Garfield, Ivinson, etc. start at 150 at the tracks, and increase going west.
The pink and red hues are perhaps most beautiful at sunrise.

This house, built in 1883, and its near twin next door are made of brick covered by stucco. The brick came from Luther Filmore’s brickyard and was produced by the Wyoming Territorial Prison inmates.

This sculpture was created by West Side artist Eric Tkachenko at the request of the homeowner.

Turn right (east) on University and drive one-half block.

The first business located on this site was a malt shop. After Prohibition, the second liquor license in the state was issued to this establishment. When a viaduct (now gone) was built on University Avenue, the traffic passed right by here and the place was known as the Viaduct Tavern.

The Falgien family has owned the bar since 1959. The late Joe Falgien is legendary in Laramie, and stories abound. Bud’s Bar is not only a neighborhood watering hole for the West Side; its patrons come from all over Laramie and include ranch hands from Woods Landing and Centennial.

On home game days, the Clark Street viaduct delivers busloads of UW football fans to celebrate (or commiserate) in the cordoned-off parking lot, with the UW mascot pony, Cowboy Joe, in patient attendance.

On summer nights, you might find gathered a retired UW professor, retired UW athletic director, a teacher, a store manager, a heavy equipment operator and a few others, all of whom know one another by name. Strangers are soon introduced.

Continue east on University, then turn left (north) on Railroad St.
What does an “old house” mean? The architectural historian might describe it as a cutstone vernacular version of Italianate and Gothic Revival, built by Frank and Sue Howe in 1886.

Neighborhood kids, attracted by its aura of Victorian mystery and foreboding, might call it the Upside Down House, telling stories of everything inside being upside down. Perhaps at one time in one of the upstairs bedrooms, furniture was indeed stored upside down.

For Irvin Taylor, the house is the one his parents bought in 1958. It had been divided into four tiny apartments years before. His family lived next door and for a time, the southeast part of this house served as a “bedroom” for him and his brother. Taylor inherited the house in 1989 and has never let go of his determination to restore it so that one day he might be able to live in it again.

The murals on the concrete supports were designed by Dewey Gallegos, from a Laramie railroad family, and painted by local teens. There was no graffiti until recently and there is still very little, but corrosion is eating away at the art. If this viaduct is replaced, as it well might be, the murals will be lost.

Continue north on Railroad St. to Bradley, then turn left (west).
13 **THE RAILROAD WYE**

A wye is a triangular-shaped arrangement of tracks with a switch at each corner. With a sufficiently long track leading away from each corner, a train of any length can be turned. For example, a train arriving at A could pull forward to B, back to C, then forward to D, reversing its direction. The Laramie wye was probably built between 1885 and 1889. Until the Laramie River Greenbelt was installed and the tracks across the river removed in the early 2000s, entire passenger trains were turned on the wye. Now just the engines are turned.

14 **MIDWEST OIL REFINERY**

**1000 BLOCK OF N. CEDAR**

The Midwest Oil Refinery was mentioned in the July 28, 1920, Laramie Republican as being ready to begin operations “soon.” The plant closed in April 1932. The metal parts were taken for another refinery or sold as scrap during WWII.

Much of the refinery was located on the west side of the street, in the area now fenced off. According to former Albany County Sheriff Vern Breazeale, the refinery closing was the “best thing that ever happened to Laramie,” because it meant the end of the stink that blew over town, smelling of rotten eggs when the wind came from the west.

The ruins next to the old company offices were once the cement ovens for making coke (a pure form of carbon) from oil. Today this site is remarkable for some of the conspicuous polite graffiti that decorates it.

Rather than attempting a U-turn here, drive north for about one-third of a mile to the commercial parking lot near Lyon St. Head south on Cedar to Lewis and turn left (east). Drive one block east on Lewis.

15 **THE HOUSE IN THE WYE**

**570 RAILROAD**

This house, built in 1875 just north of the wye track, was owned by only four families in its first 130 years. The house was sold by Lawrence and Elizabeth Fee to John Schenck in 1889. He kept it until 1931, when Albert Brown became the third owner. Herman and Esther French bought it in 1944, raising seven children here. Appropriately enough for someone living in the wye, Herman was a railroad switchman. He retired in the 1970s.

Continue west on Bradley to Cedar, then turn right on Cedar (north) and drive for about one-quarter of a mile.
These buildings were built in 1923, using brick gathered from the then-abandoned coke factory (stop 14). Laramie area soil was just right for making brick, and there have been several kilns in the area over the past 100 years. The style of this house is rare in America but more common in Mexico. The Quesada family lived here for many years.

This brick building, now painted gray, was the business address of Harold Wolcott, an auto mechanic in the 1930s and '40s. In the backyard is a pretty wooden gazebo.
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