

# Why a Glamping Ordinance Was a Good Idea in Garfield County, UT

Kaden Figgins, Economic Development Director

07/14/2022



IMAGE: A woman relaxing in front of a glamping tent in the desert

## Why a Glamping Ordinance Was a Good Idea in Garfield County, UT

By: Kaden Figgins | Director, Planning & Economic Development | Garfield County, Utah

Has your community been considering adopting a glamping ordinance?

**First of all, what is "glamping"?** Glamping is modern terminology used to define "glamorous camping". Glamping developments are situated in the outdoors and more exposed to the elements than a traditional hotel. That being said, glamping units tend to have similar facilities to a hotel, such as indoor plumbing, heating and air, electricity, and even onsite restaurants and other services or facilities in some cases.

**Next, a little about Garfield County:** Garfield consists of 5,000 square miles – 91% of which is managed by the Federal Government, 4% by the State and 5% are private lands. Although this can be very challenging at the Local level, it makes Garfield County a great place to live due to the fact that we are one of, if not the only County in the Nation with portions of 3 National Parks (Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands). In addition, there is the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, 3 State Parks, Scenic Highway 12, Dixie National Forest, Panguitch Lake, Red Canyon

and many others that make Garfield County a destination point for tourists and recreationists.

Garfield County first adopted a glamping ordinance in 2019 and has updated the ordinance several times since then. We felt a glamping ordinance was necessary, not only due to the increased demand for glamping developments, but especially due to the size of some of the developments and remoteness of potential locations. Our approach wasn't necessarily to prohibit glamping from happening, more so to allow for it in certain zoning districts and to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the guests and adjacent property owners.

**When crafting the ordinance, our primary considerations were:**

- accessibility,
- density,
- definitions,
- location,
- building code standards and
- infrastructure requirements

Most glamping developers want their locations to be as remote as possible, in order to capture ambiance of camping in the outdoors. We wanted to make that possible for the developers, while at the same time, proactively requiring sufficient access and facilities for emergency services.

Additionally, we felt it was important to specifically define what "glamping" is in Garfield County. For example, some communities classify RVs, tiny homes, shipping



containers or other alternative types of accommodations as glamping – we did not want to do that. Instead, we elected to define glamping as any "canvas or membrane-covered frame structure" "including, but not limited to: tents, yurts, teepees, covered wagons, inflatable spheres, geodesic domes, etc." We also worked closely with our local health department to ensure proper facilities were required for potable drinking water and wastewater disposal. Coy Porter, the State Fire Marshall was even in attendance during the first public hearing in 2019 and commented that he would be using our ordinance as a model when

considering fire suppression requirements for future glamping developments across the State of Utah.

Since the original adoption of the glamping ordinance in 2019, the new regulations have been very well received by both developers and other departments within the County. In fact, large developments such as Under Canvas have commented multiple times on the clarity of the regulations and how accommodating County staff has been throughout the process.

If your community is considering adopting a glamping ordinance, please feel free to contact me at any time with any questions, comments or concerns. I would also be happy to share our ordinance as there is no need to reinvent the wheel! You may contact me by phone at (435) 676-1157 or by email at [kaden.figgins@garfield.utah.gov](mailto:kaden.figgins@garfield.utah.gov). (For more about planning for glamping in Utah, see the [recent Corner Post Article](#) that Kaden is also referenced in.)



***Kaden Figgins is the Director of Planning & Economic Development for Garfield County, Utah. He was born and raised in Panguitch, the Garfield County Seat, and attended Dixie State University (now Utah Tech University) where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Finance. Kaden and his wife Cianna met in high school and are among the few who were able to move back to Panguitch and find a sustainable job and a home to purchase after attending college.***