



The Cody LDS Temple is seen under construction with the spire only partially completed.

In March 2023 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints announced they would be building a nearly 9950 sqft temple in a rural neighborhood in Cody, Wyoming.

The plot of land is situated at the end of residential street, a suburb of the small town of 10,000. Driving down the Skyline Drive the homes become larger, the yards more manicured until one arrives at Olive Glenn, where a collection of large stately homes with picture windows gaze out at the junction of Cedar and Rattlesnake mountains, beyond which lies Yellowstone Park. Most of the yards, are punctuated with signs reading “Relocate the Temple.”

A group called “Preserve Our Cody Neighborhoods” has been fighting the construction of the temple from the time the location was announced. The group says the location is unlawful, inappropriate for the area and violates city zoning and building codes. One of the complaints is against the 101 foot gold pyramidal spire that will be constructed of a white concrete-like material and will likely be illuminated at night.

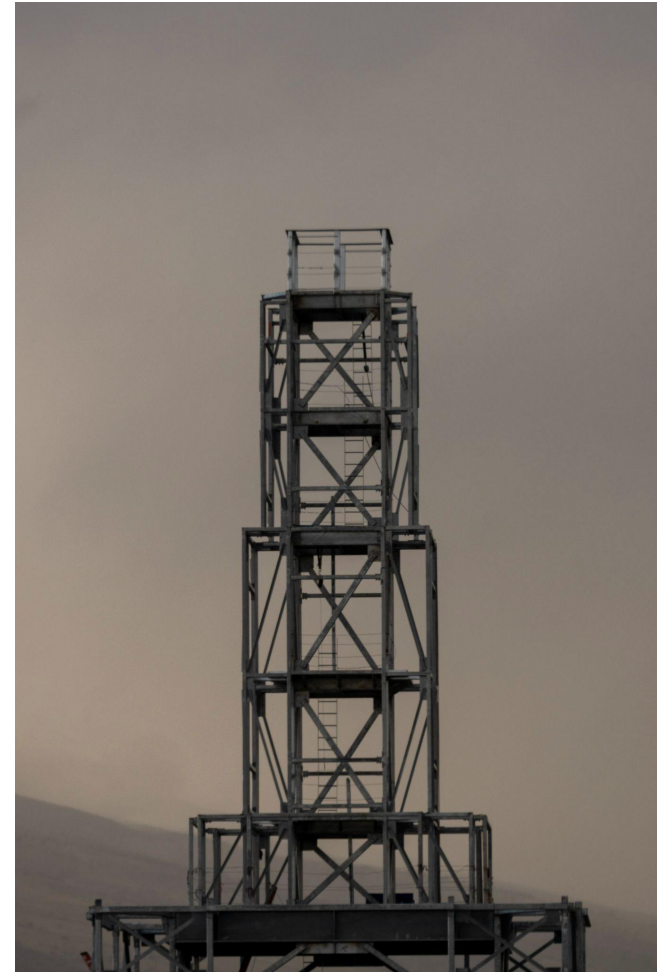
Cody is one of many cities where groups are ardently opposing the construction of LDS temples, like Fairview, Texas, Heber City, Utah, Las Vegas, Nevada to name a few.

The LDS church was granted a building permit in August 2024, and the POCN filed an appeal to be heard by the Wyoming Supreme Court. Despite the pending appeal construction commenced in September 2024. The case was brought to the supreme court of Wyoming in February 2025, and is currently being deliberated. It's possible the court could demand the temple be dismantled.

To the passerby the construction site is vast, covering several acres of what was once a pristine sage brush plain, home to migrating ungulates, foxes and birds. Now the skeleton of what will be the towering spire is seen jutting upwards from a wedding cake shaped building - think Brutalist architecture meets Neuschwanstein. Trucks, pallets of building materials and workers in yellow fluorescent vests can be seen scurrying around, installing window frames, digging trenches for the future sewer, and as one resident observed, endlessly driving backwards in beeping trucks.

Eleven percent of Cody's residents are LDS.





A visitors' center in a modular office where guests can watch videos about the temple and the LDS faith as well as see 3d printed models of the future temple





Signs opposing the construction in a house opposite the construction site.



When Becky Stern looks out of her window she she feels ill and disappointed. She is part of the POCN group that had a hearing before a judge to contest the building of the temple, “Were not even sure he read our briefing - We put up lots of arguments as to why planning and zoning should not have approved the permits, but they did anyway. He never addressed any of our concerns. So we now have an appeal before the Wyoming Supreme Court.”

Stern says the neighborhood is already impacted by the construction and she feels like she’s living in a zoo People drive through the neighborhood to see the site. Construction often takes place late at night, and early in the morning. While she isn’t hopeful their suit will be successful she has “lovely imaginings of the noise when they’re told to take it down.”

If the Wyoming supreme Court rules in favor the POCN, the LDS church could be asked to remove the construction.



The view from Charles Stern’s sitting room





Brandi and Ty Nelson look at the construction from their porch. The Nelsons plan to sell their home and relocate because of the temple..



The Nelsons built their home 23 years ago. “ We were one of the first houses up here and had the most amazing view,” Brandi Nelson explained the reasons why she and her husband don’t want to live next to a the temple that is going to have a 100 ft tall white granite spire that will be illuminated potentially throughout the night. They have had a taste of what the light pollution will be like as flood lights working at night have made it impossible to watch TV. Light blasts into their bedroom that faces the construction site.

“Our best living spaces stare at something that we see as done through deception, not following city ordinances, and it's not something we want to live with,” Brandi Laments

When the Nelsons built their home they were required to amend their construction plans to fit within a height of 30 feet. They complied and feel angry that the LDS church is not subject to the same building codes. Brandi emphasized that she and her husband are both very faithful people, and their objection to the temple has nothing to do with religion but everything to do with following the rules.

There are places in Cody that are commercially zoned where the temple could have been built with a 101 foot spire without issues. Ty explains, “They could have built this in town without even having to go to planning and zoning - they could have built whatever they wanted if they would have put it in the correct palace.”







Brandi and Ty Nelson reflected in their picture window next to the construction of the LDS temple





The picture window from the inside.





Brandi's home office overlooks the construction site.

The Nelsons say the local members of the LDS church have been "very good," but the representatives from Salt Lake have been more difficult to deal with. Ty says, "They don't listen and they don't care. They sent their attorneys in and they threatened us. They are basically just bullies."

According to Ty, a lawyer representing the LDS church, Loyal Hulme told him the church would sue him individually adding "We'll sue you and we don't lose."





Dan and Connie Haman in front of their home two houses away from the temple construction.

The Hamans say living next to the construction site has been hard - trash and debris constantly blow on to their property. They have called the police who have not been able to be helpful, as a result they have lost faith in the city. Dan says its a constant reminder of what is to come. His vision of the future if they don't win their case is a 101 foot white building that is going to be illuminated possibly 24 hours a day, "Were going to have a tall white building in our backyard, so the night skies are going to be gone. It's a lot different than having somebody living across the alley from you."

Haman feels let down by the city government, the mayor and the city planner who was LDS. According to Haman and others " They threatened to sue everybody when they got here. The city attorney took that to heart . We're a small town and they have more money than we do. The city planning and zoning were overwhelmed. They were just outgunned from the start."





Binoculars in the Haman dining area, once used to watch wildlife, are now used to observe construction.





A mule deer trots through the Haman's backyard. Some neighbors closer to the construction say wildlife they once enjoyed seeing is now gone





Doug and Sheila Peterson at their kitchen table.





The Peterson home with the temple looming behind.





A planning and zoning meeting at Cody's City Hall . Members of the committee pledge allegiance to the flag. The temple project was approved under the when Todd Stowell was the City Planner and Matt Moss was on the planning board.Members of POCN claim that Stowell and Moss who are both members of the LDS church were biased and should have recused themselves





David Rich, Construction Missionary for the LDS church shows a display of temples throughout the world. When asked his feeling about all the signs in the neighborhood protesting the construction he said he thought people were misinformed and expected that once the temple was completed the locals would become accustomed and grow to like the temple.



Cody mayors' portraits at City Hall. The current mayor, Matt Hall initially blocked the building permit for the temple citing concerns about zoning restrictions, and the impact the building would have on the neighborhood. After legal pressure and fear of a federal lawsuit the city eventually relented and issued the permit.





Luke Hopkin a local LDS resident says he's "pro -religious freedom" and likes to see religious structures being built regardless of denomination. Hopkin says he understands the nearby neighbors concerns, but overall he's received more positive feedback than negative. Once the temple is built he plans to visit a few times a month, but expects his wife will be there several times a week.





A view of the temple construction from inside the visitors center.



Elder Layne Beck and his wife Janet at the Historic Cody Mural and Museum. The Becks guide visitors through a museum that features the LDS history in Wyoming. The museum is also a church and was donated by Glenn Nielson, the grandfather of the man who donated the land for the Cody Temple.

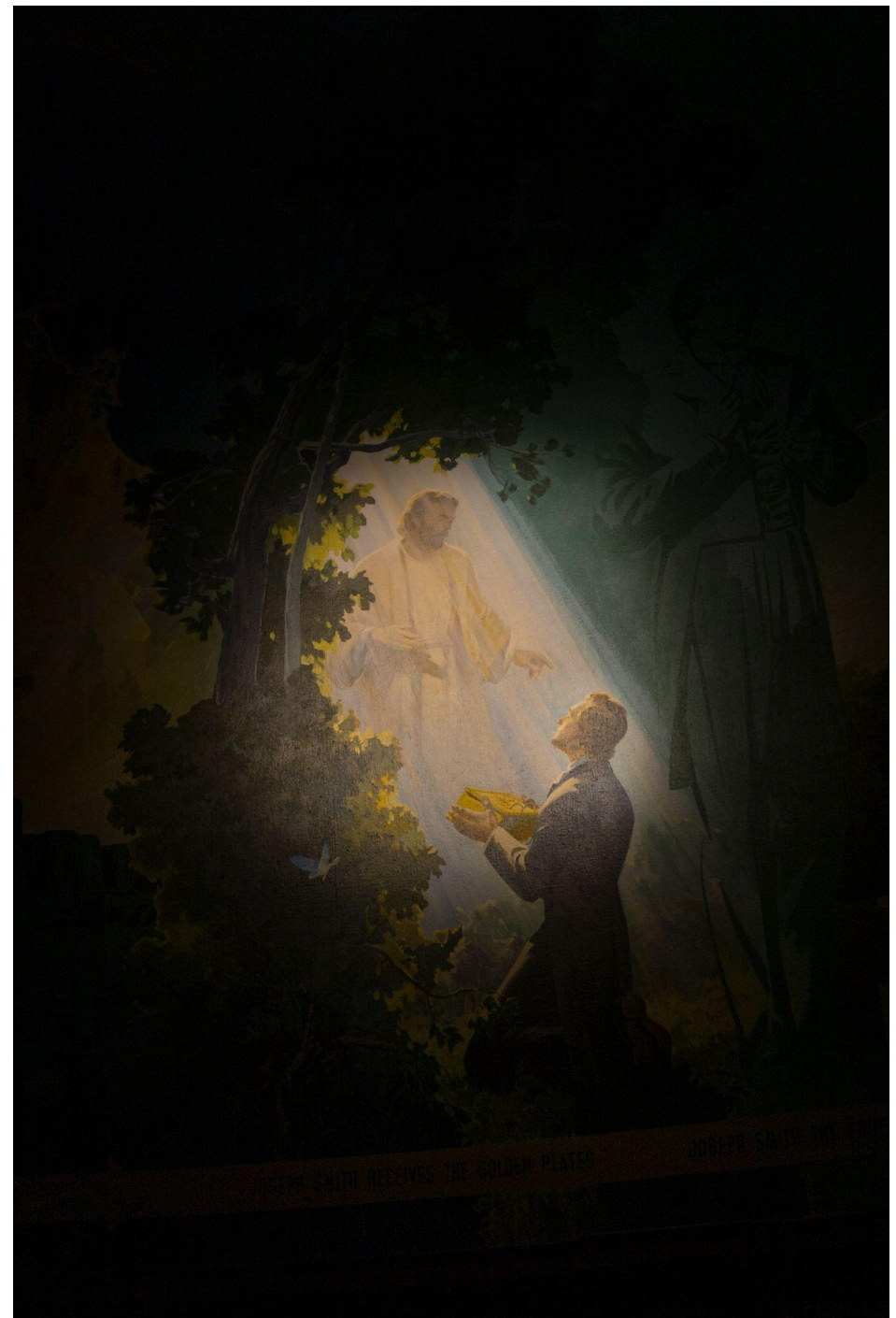
Mr. Beck mentioned that the community in Billings, Montana people were opposed to a temple also built in a residential area, but when the crime rates went down due to the 24 hour lighting, public sentiment became more favorable.







A statue of Jesus at a local LDS church or stake house.



A detail of a mural depicting Joseph Smith and Jesus.





Janet Beck points out details in a mural in Cody depicting the history of the LDS church and their migration to Wyoming.





Construction underway



Cody, Wyoming





The Petit home, where curtains are closed to block the view of the temple construction.