



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: July 16, 2024

DATE: June 14, 2024

TO: Board of County Commissioners

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THROUGH: Kelly Mullin, AICP, Division Director, Planning & Building Division, Community Services Department, 328.3619, kmullin@washoecounty.gov

SUBJECT: Public Hearing: Second reading and possible adoption of an Ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) by modifying various sections in Division Two—Area Plan Regulations, Division Four—Development Standards, and Division Nine—General Provisions, in order to update regulations related to allowed residential uses in the Spanish Springs Planning Area, maximum height restrictions in the Sun Valley Planning Area, multifamily parking minimums, bike parking, turf requirements, common and private open space, and definitions. These updates include modifying various sections to: remove Table C-1 which modifies allowed residential uses in the Spanish Springs Planning Area; remove a subsection limiting structures in the downtown Sun Valley Planning Area to two stories in height; update minimum off-street parking space requirements for multifamily housing; update requirements for bicycle storage by removing requirements for bicycle parking spaces, by adding design standards for short and long-term bicycle storage, by adding design requirements for bicycle racks, and by removing Figure 110.410.15.2 which shows bicycle parking space dimensions; remove the requirement to provide turf areas in multifamily developments of a minimum of fifty (50) percent of the required landscaping area; modify minimum size and dimension requirements for private open space in multifamily developments; add standards for turf areas provided as common open space for multifamily developments; and add definitions for short and long-term bicycle parking; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto. (All Commission Districts.)

SUMMARY

To conduct a second reading of, and possibly adopt, an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code), by modifying various sections in

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Division Two- Area Plan Regulations, Division Four- Development Standards, and Division Nine- General Provisions, in order to update regulations related to allowed residential uses in the Spanish Springs planning area, maximum height restrictions in the Sun Valley planning area, multifamily parking minimums, bike parking, turf requirements, common and private open space, and definitions. The requested code amendments are described in detail beginning on page 3 of this staff report. Additional analysis can be found in Attachment D, Planning Commission staff report.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:

Vulnerable Populations: Expand appropriate housing options across community.

PREVIOUS ACTION

June 18, 2024. The Washoe County Board of County Commissioners (Board) introduced and conducted a first reading for Ordinance Number 1917, an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) by modifying various sections related to allowed residential uses in the Spanish Springs planning area, maximum height restrictions in the Sun Valley planning area, multifamily parking minimums, bike parking, turf requirements, common and private open space, and definitions. These changes are aimed at increasing affordable and attainable housing in Washoe County known as Affordable Housing Package 2.

The Board of County Commissioners approved the first reading with modifications to the Sun Valley planning area story limit, removing the story limit for properties inside the Downtown Sun Valley Area, and maintaining the story limit for the remainder of the Sun Valley planning area.

May 7, 2024. The Washoe County Planning Commission (PC) reviewed the proposed amendments to Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) and voted 5-1 to recommend approval of Development Code Amendment WDCA24-0002 to the Board. In doing so, the Planning Commission made the following findings in accordance with Washoe County Code Section 110.818.15(e):

1. Consistency with Master Plan. The proposed development code amendment is in substantial compliance with the policies and action programs of the Washoe County Master Plan;
2. Promotes the Purpose of the Development Code. The proposed development code amendment will not adversely impact the public health, safety or welfare, and will promote the original purposes for the Development Code as expressed in Article 918, Adoption of Development Code;
3. Response to Changed Conditions. The proposed development code amendment responds to changed conditions or further studies that have occurred since the Development Code was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, and the requested amendment allow for a more desirable utilization of land within the regulatory zones; and
4. No Adverse Affects. The proposed development code amendment will not adversely affect the implementation of the policies and action programs of the

Conservation Element or the Population Element of the Washoe County Master Plan.

November 14, 2023. The Washoe County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) directed the Planning Program to pursue several development code amendments related to affordable and attainable housing, including a set of amendments to reduce regulatory barriers to multifamily and diverse types of housing. This set of amendments is known as Affordable Housing Package 2.

BACKGROUND

Housing affordability and attainability are identified in strategic planning and vision documents as one of the most pressing issues in Washoe County. US Census data indicates that between 2010 and 2022 there was a 145% increase in median home value and only a 58% increase in median home income. In addition to existing affordability issues, the 2022 Consensus Forecast anticipates that unincorporated Washoe County will need to absorb up to a 16,824-person population increase between 2022 and 2042. Washoe County will need to increase housing supply by approximately 6,840 dwelling units within the unincorporated County to support the population increase. This in addition to the existing shortage of affordable housing units, which according to the [Truckee Meadows Regional Strategy for Housing Affordability](#) (TMRSHA) is 7,350 units in unincorporated Washoe County (pg. 45). These pressures precipitate the need to address housing accessibility and affordability on every front, and one of the opportunities to do that is in removing existing barriers to diverse types of housing development.

The proposed set of amendments focus on reducing regulatory barriers to multifamily development and aligning the planning area modifiers with county-wide housing regulations. While the amendments span several sections of code, they have a shared aim of supporting the development of different housing types and making housing regulations more consistent throughout the planning areas of the county. Each piece of the associated amendments is addressed in turn.

Article 216 Spanish Springs Area

On March 19, 2024, the Board adopted Affordable Housing Package 1, which focused on lowering barriers to build accessory dwelling units (ADUs). As identified in the original scope of the four affordable housing packages presented to the Board on November 14, 2023, some of the area plans contain additional restrictions on housing, including ADUs, that would need to be addressed as part of package 2. This is the case for the Spanish Springs area. Article 216 contains Table C-1, which modifies some allowed residential uses in the Spanish Springs area. Generally speaking, Table C-1 precludes the opportunity for residential development in the neighborhood commercial (NC) regulatory zone, limits opportunities to apply for an administrative permit for a duplex in certain regulatory zones and requires a special use permit for detached ADUs. In order to align housing regulations throughout the county and to lower barriers to diverse forms of housing, staff is proposing that this table be eliminated in its entirety. If Table C-1 is eliminated the use table in Article 302 would therefore apply as it does to other areas in the county.

Article 218 Sun Valley Area

Sun Valley has, through Article 218, established a building story limit in addition to the height limits associated with each regulatory zone. This limit was established in 1993, when the community modifiers were adopted in conjunction with the comprehensive code update completed at that time. The two-story height limit has served as a barrier to the development of diverse housing types and will continue to do so. While the two-story limit is consistent with some aspects of the community vision as described in Envision Washoe 2040—specifically the preservation of open vistas—it is counter to many of the goals for the area. Balancing single-family homes with higher density housing is one of the identified opportunities in Sun Valley, as is increasing a mix of housing supply and preserving open spaces through infill and mixed-use development. If the two-story height limit is removed, the vast majority of Sun Valley would be subject to a 35’ height limit—preserving valued vistas—while allowing for more diverse housing types. It would also remove a barrier to development of the mixed-use corridor along Sun Valley Blvd.

A two-story height limit is established in two parts of Article 218: first, in WCC 110.218.20 covering the entirety of Sun Valley, and secondly in WCC 110.218.45(f), covering specifically the Downtown Sun Valley corridor. The language specific to the Sun Valley corridor was not identified at the time of the Planning Commission meeting, but removal of the two-story limit was included in the intent and description of the amendments. Accordingly, the language mandating a two-story limit in the Downtown Sun Valley corridor removed in the ordinance for the first reading in order to fulfill the intent of the amendments to remove the two-story height limit throughout the Sun Valley planning area.

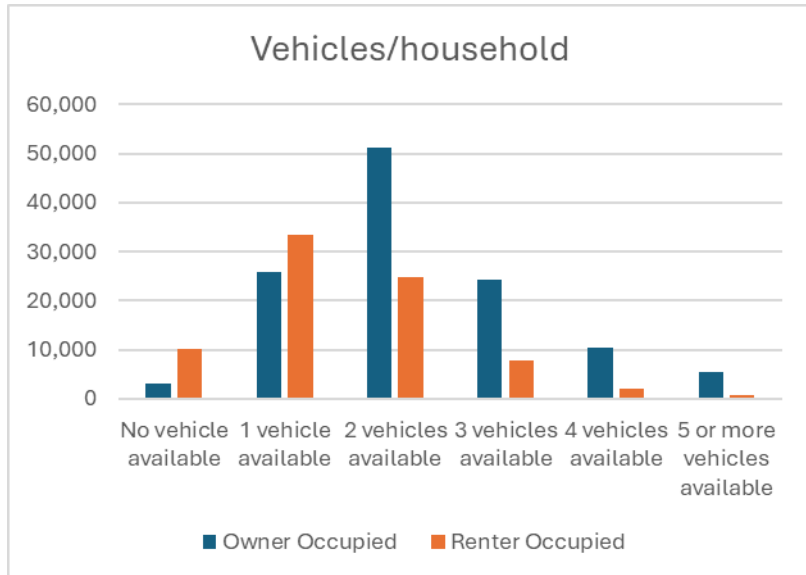
As a result of the June 18, 2024, Board of County Commissioner meeting the Sun Valley Planning Area removal of the story limit was modified. The Downtown Sun Valley corridor will no longer have a story limit; however, the remainder of the Sun Valley Planning Area will retain the two-story limit.

Article 410 Parking and Loading

Washoe County has not updated the parking standards for multi-family developments, or bike storage/parking requirements since 1993. Multi-family development is the only parking standard being updated. The current and proposed calculations are outlined below.

	Current	Proposed
1 Bedroom	1.6 Spaces	N/A
2 Bedrooms or Fewer	2.1 Spaces	1 Space
3 Bedrooms	N/A	2 Spaces
4 or More Bedrooms	N/A	2.5 Spaces
Covered Parking	1 covered parking space is required for every unit	1 covered parking space is required for every 2 units

The proposed parking standards are intended to reduce the number of required parking spaces for multifamily development and create more of a gradient between small and large units. While each parking space appears relatively small on its own (about 150 sf at the smallest), the cost of parking land use, construction, and operation and maintenance is significant and often hidden within the cost of housing.



Some existing trends nationally and in Washoe County indicate that the current minimum parking space requirements are higher than what is necessary. First, census data indicates that between 1940 and 2018 average household size has decreased by a full person, from 3.6 to 2.6. This means that the same number of housing units are housing 29% less people. One-third of American households only contain one person. In Washoe County, the largest share of rental households has one vehicle available. Most others either have two vehicles or none. This is illustrated in the above figure, which depicts the number of vehicles per household for owner-occupied households (in blue) and renter-occupied households (in orange). The vertical axis shows the number of households and the horizontal the number of vehicles. In general, due to the decrease in household size and low supply of small housing types, many households have less occupants than the size could support (TMRSHA, pg. 43). These factors led to staff’s recommendation of requiring one parking space per unit containing two bedrooms or fewer. This parking requirement is appropriate for population trends and creates a gradient in minimum parking between bigger and smaller units that will encourage the development of small units through decreased costs. A review of similar jurisdictions both regionally and nationally showed that what staff has proposed is more than what Reno and Sparks require, but in the middle of what is required nationally.

Other updates in this Article pertain to bicycle storage and bicycle rack standards. Washoe County currently has minimal standards related to bicycle storage or bicycle racks. The proposed code standards outline the type of bicycle racks developers should use that provide a benefit to those utilizing bicycles as a mode of transportation. It is important for Washoe County to continue supporting multimodal transportation as affordable housing code updates continue, to support residents who may not have access to a vehicle and provide an overall alternative to driving, which through parking leads to inefficient land use. As such, the changes to multifamily parking minimums and to bicycle storage standards are complementary and represent a wholistic approach to supporting more affordable and attainable housing.

Article 412 Landscaping

The purpose of Article 412, Landscaping includes providing regulations for the development, installation, and maintenance of landscaped areas within Washoe County, without inhibiting creative landscape design. The current language requires multi-family developments to have a turf area equivalent to a minimum of 50% of the total landscaped area. Northern Nevada's climate, requirements of permanent irrigation, and continued maintenance of turf areas create an unintended burden on multi-family housing. They also work counter to the goals of Envision Washoe 2040 to support water-wise landscaping. Removal of this requirement will allow for more efficient use of land area. While the proposal does eliminate the minimum requirement of turf, it doesn't prevent future development from creating turf areas for their residents.

Article 432 Open Space Standards

Residential private open space standards outlined in WCC Section 110.432.10 have not been updated since 1996. Washoe County planning staff reviewed various jurisdictions nationally to make the County's balcony and deck standards more consistent with regional and national standards.

A reduction in the minimum size of ground floor rear yards, ground floor patios, and upper-level decks or balconies has been identified as an item that can lower the cost of construction of certain housing types. The current required dimensions can result in additional engineering requirements and construction requirements to support such large decks and balconies. The reduction will reduce those to costs more in line with what is anticipated nationally for multifamily developments. Additionally, the development code now provides an option to forgo decks, patios, and balconies entirely and instead increase the square footage of required common open space.

Residential common open space standards are outlined in WCC Section 110.432.15 and identify the types of common open space that can be used within residential developments. One of the options is large turf areas. To make these turf areas more useable and defined for the residents, turf area standards have been expanded to specify turf area dimensions, square footage, and locations. This will remove any ambiguous interpretations from staff and developers for this type of amenity while also ensuring that any turf areas provided are usable amenities.

Article 902 Definitions

With the addition of more defined bicycle storage standards and the different bicycle parking requirements, it's important for bicycle parking types to be identified and defined to ensure proper enforcement and adherence from developers and staff. Definitions for short-term and long-term bicycle parking are therefore proposed to be added.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed changes occur in Divisions 2, 4, and 9 of WCC Chapter 110. The changes are summarized below.

Planning Area Modifiers:

- Remove Table C-1 from Article 216 Spanish Springs Area to align Spanish Springs residential use type allowances with what is allowed county-wide as specified in Article 302.
- Modify section 110.218.20 and remove subsection 110.218.45(f) from Article 218 Sun Valley Area, which specifies a two-story maximum height for all residential, commercial, and industrial buildings in Sun Valley. The proposed change will remove the two-story height limit in Downtown Sun Valley and retain it for the rest of the Sun Valley planning area. In most regulatory zones, the maximum height is 35 feet.

Parking and Loading Requirements:

- Modify minimum parking requirements for multifamily housing to reduce parking requirements for smaller units, slightly increase requirements for larger units (four bedrooms or more), and to reduce covered parking requirements from one covered space per unit to one covered space per every two units.
- Add standards for bike storage related to design, installation, and location.
- Update minimum requirements for short-term and long-term bike storage.
- Add definitions relating to bike storage to Article 902.

Landscaping:

- Remove requirement that multifamily developments have a turf area equivalent to a minimum of 50% of the total landscaped area.

Open Space Standards:

- Reduce the minimum size of ground floor rear yards, ground floor patios, and upper-level decks or balconies for multifamily development.
- Add minimum dimension, square footage, and placement requirements for turf areas that are an amenity as part of common open space in multifamily development.

A redline showing all code amendments is attached as Attachment A.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Community meetings to discuss these amendments were held on April 1st and 3rd from 5:00-6:00 pm. One meeting was held at the Washoe County complex and the other via Zoom. Approximately 5 members of the public attended the April 1st meeting, and approximately 7 members of the public attended the April 3rd meeting. Generally, questions and comments were related to the removal of the height limit in Sun Valley, whether or not density allowances will change, and changes to balcony and patio sizes. Summaries of both meetings are attached as Exhibit B to the Planning Commission staff report (Attachment D).

Upon the request of the community, staff also attended the Sun Valley Community Advisory Board (CAB) meeting on May 4, 2024, to provide an update on and discuss the proposed amendments. At that meeting, similar concerns were expressed regarding the removal of the two-story height limit and about multifamily development in general.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners hold a second reading and adopt the attached ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code), by modifying various sections in Division Two – Area Plan Regulations, Division Four- Development Standards, and Division Nine – General Provisions, in order to update regulations related to the Spanish Springs Area Modifiers, Sun Valley Area Modifiers, Parking and Loading Requirements, Landscaping, and Open Space Standards.

It is further recommended that the Board affirm the following four findings of fact that the Washoe County Planning Commission made on May 7, 2024, as recorded within Resolution Number 24-10 (Attachment C):

1. Consistency with Master Plan. The proposed Development Code amendment is in substantial compliance with the policies and action programs of the Washoe County Master Plan.
2. Promotes the Purpose of the Development Code. The proposed Development Code amendment will not adversely impact the public health, safety or welfare, and will promote the original purposes for the development code as expressed in Article 918, Adoption of Development Code.
3. Response to Changed Conditions. The proposed Development Code amendment responds to changed conditions or further studies that have occurred since the Development Code was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, and the requested amendment allow for a more desirable utilization of land within the regulatory zones.
4. No Adverse Effects. The proposed Development Code amendment will not adversely affect the implementation of the policies and action programs of the Conservation Element or the Population Element of the Washoe County Master Plan.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with Planning Commission’s recommendation, a possible motion would be:

“Move to adopt Ordinance Number [insert Ordinance number provided by County Clerk], which is an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) by modifying Divisions 2, 4, and 9 in order to update regulations related to the Spanish Springs Area Modifiers, Sun Valley Area Modifiers, Parking and Loading Requirements, Landscaping, and Open Space Standards; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto; and to affirm the four findings of fact that the Washoe County Planning Commission made on May 7, 2024, as recorded with Resolution Number 24-10 and attached to the staff report for this item.”

Attachments:

- A. Working Copy of Proposed Ordinance
- B. Clean Copy of Proposed Ordinance
- C. Planning Commission Resolution No. 24-10
- D. Planning Commission Staff Report for WDCA24-0002
- E. Minutes of May 7, 2024 Planning Commission Public Hearing
- F. Public Comment