

Gerlach Citizens Advisory Committee



---

**COMMUNITY  
SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

---

# Washoe County Planning Housing Initiatives

April 9, 2026

# Background

- In 2023, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) prioritized housing affordability as Planning's top implementation item
- Starting in 2024, Planning has proposed a series of housing-related development code amendments (DCA's)
  - 5 adopted to date, 4 in process

# Envision Washoe 2040



Action	Type	Associated Principles and Policies	Lead
<b>Ongoing and Immediate Action Items</b>			
Update the Development Code to remove barriers to the provision of affordable and workforce housing consistent with ongoing Washoe County Strategic planning efforts.	Development Code Revisions	PH 3.1; PH 3.2; PH 3.3	Planning
Conduct a development code assessment to identify barriers to affordable housing.	Development Code Revisions	PH 3.1; PH 3.2; PH 3.4	Planning
Evaluate the maximum densities and consider removing discretionary permit requirements and expanding the types of housing allowed by-right in all zones where appropriate.	Development Code Revisions	PH 2.1; PH 3.1; PH 3.2; PH 3.4; PH 3.6; PH 5.3	Planning
Revise the accessory dwelling units section of the Development Code to expand options and reduce regulatory barriers.	Development Code Revisions	PH3.5	Planning



# Overview of Changes




- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Standards for multifamily development
- Expanded allowances for “missing-middle” housing
- Development standards for small homes and lots
- Infill development standards
- Mixed-use development standards
- Housing Incentives
  - Senior housing
  - Small units
  - Attainable housing

# Accessory Dwelling Units



- Administrative review permit => Allowed by Right
- Changes to **maximum size** allowances
  - Medium Density Suburban (MDS): 800 sf => 1,200 sf
  - All zones: 50% main dwelling => 80% main dwelling
  - Created “**minor ADU**”
    - Under 500 sf
    - Allowed accessory structure setbacks when under 12 feet tall
  - Added “**guest quarters**”

[HOME](#) [GALLERY](#) [KNOW YOUR PROPERTY](#) [FAQs](#) [PROJECT](#) [DESIGNERS](#)



## The ADU HUB

The Washoe County Accessory Dwelling Unit HUB

Welcome to Washoe County's centralized information guide to completing an attached or detached independent living unit project on your property.

**Additional living spaces** on a property are called **accessory dwelling units** or ADU's. Below are the categories of ADU's as defined in local government adopted codes.

- A detached accessory dwelling unit (DADU)**, is a fully independent living area located in a separate structure from the main house.
- A junior accessory dwelling unit**, (under 500 sq ft.) is smaller in size allowing for placement closer to the property line.
- An attached accessory dwelling unit (AADU)**, is a living area located within or attached to the main house.

# Multifamily Development



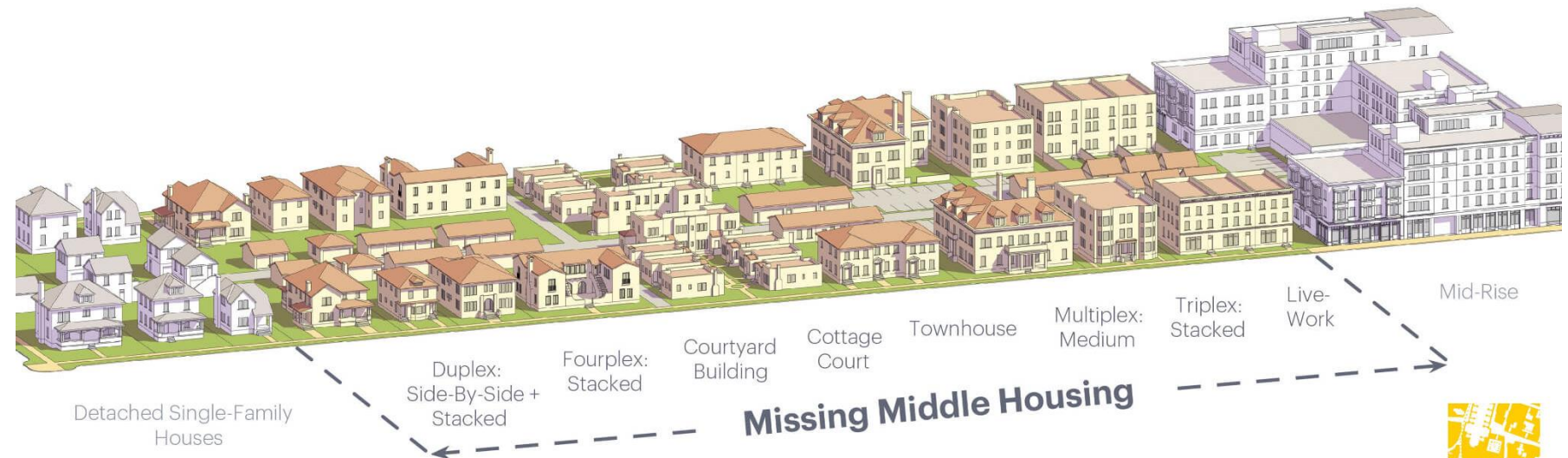
- Changes to update outdated multifamily development standards (most standards had not been updated since 1993)
- Parking minimums updated based on Washoe County vehicles per household data
- Turf requirement, balcony requirement, and open space standards updated
- Bicycle parking standards modified

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

# Missing-Middle Housing



- Missing-middle housing: a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units that are compatible in scale with detached single-family housing
- Added **triplexes, quadplexes, and cottage courts** as allowed uses (with various permitting requirements) in suburban zones
- Added **employee housing** in commercial zones
- Residential densities not modified



# Small Home and Lot Standards



- Facilitating “starter homes”
- Allows alternate lot dimensions and road design for developments with units under 1,200 square feet
  - Minimum lot size reduced by 50% for small unit developments

Front Yard Setback (Living Space)	10 feet
Front Yard Setback (Garage)	20 feet
Rear Yard Setback	10 feet
Rear Yard Setback (garage accessed from alley)	5 feet
Side Yard Setback	5 feet

**63%** of households in Washoe County are 1 or 2 person households

# Infill Development Standards



- To facilitate development and re-development on **non-conforming or small lots**
- Setback reductions
  - **Residential:** Front yard setback variation when the structure conforms with existing setbacks for the area
  - **Commercial:** Front yard setback 10 feet, side and rear yard setbacks 5 feet
- Requirement for 1 off-street parking space per unit
- Conformance required with existing design of area (building orientation and site design)
- Parking to rear or side of structures for middle housing



# Mixed-Use (in progress)



- Required by the State
- Allows multifamily housing in commercial zones

Residential Use Types (Section 110.304.15)	GC	NC	TC
Family Residential			
Multi Family, Minor	-A	S2 A	-A
Multi Family	-A	S2 A	-A

## REGULATORY ZONE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Regulatory Zones	Title	Yards – Setbacks*			Maximum Height (feet)	Maximum Density/Intensity (du/ac)	Minimum Lot Size~	Minimum Lot Width (feet)
		Front (feet)	Side (feet)	Rear (feet)				
GC	General Commercial	10	10	10	80	N/A-14	10,000 sf	75
NC	Neighborhood Comm/Office	15	15	20	60	5/7/9 (f)	10,000 sf	75
TC	Tourist Commercial	20	10	10	45	N/A-14	10,000 sf	100

# Housing Incentives

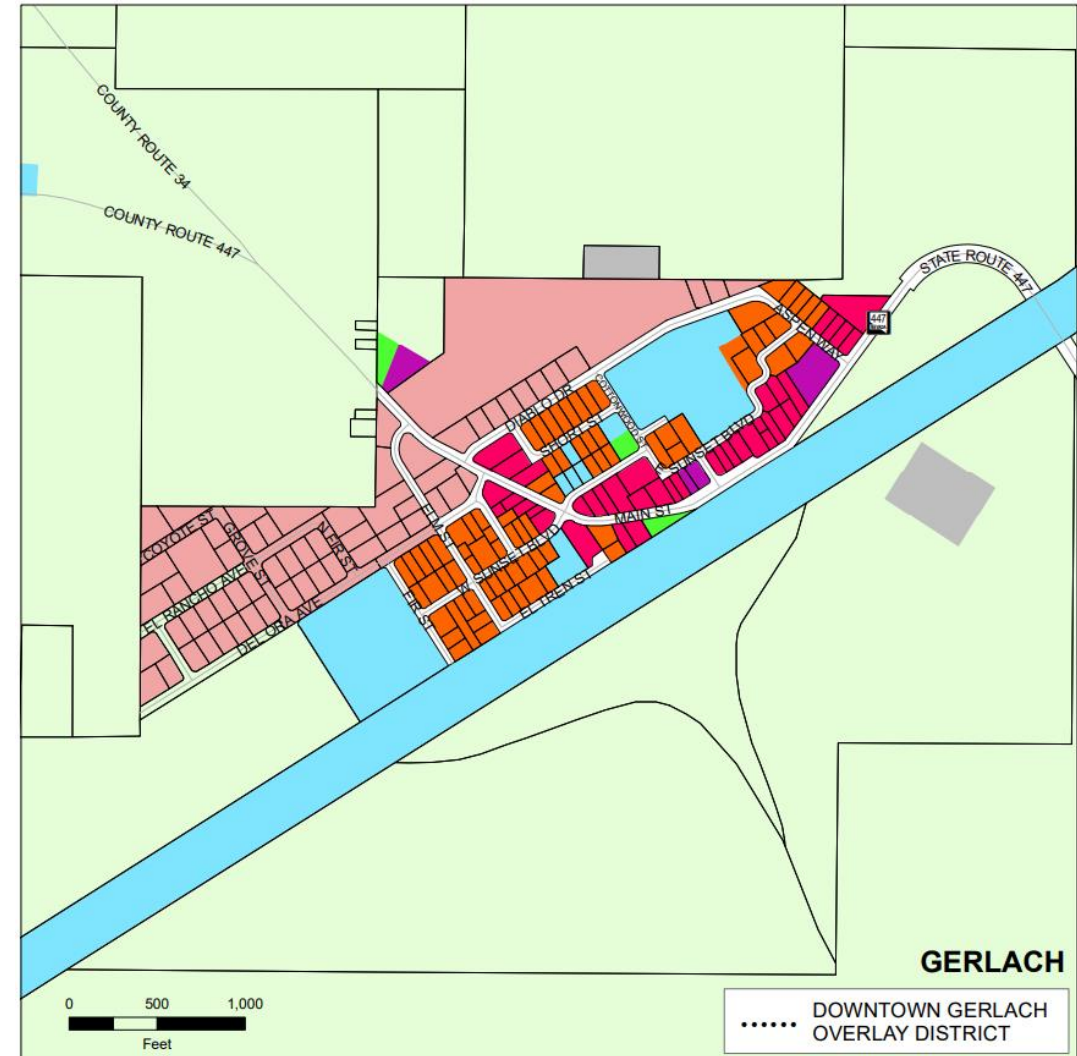


- Density incentives
  - **Senior housing:** 25% increase in allowed density
  - **Small units** (under 1,200 sf): 25% increase in allowed density
  - **Attainable housing** (0-150% AMI): up to the next densest regulatory zone
    - Can be used in medium and high density suburban zones and urban zones
  - **Senior attainable housing:** can utilize attainable housing incentives and senior housing incentives
- Process incentives (mandated by the State)
  - **Attainable housing:** staff liaison and prioritization over other projects
  - **Attainable housing projects** (receive funding from the State): allowed to obtain administrative review permit instead of required special use permits or other discretionary permits

# Applicability to High Desert Area



- Most changes on the basis of zoning
  - Will apply in areas of the High Desert with suburban zoning, such as Gerlach and Empire
- High Desert modifiers still apply



# Helpful Links



- [Accessory dwelling unit HUB](#)
- [Master Plan Implementation Webpage](#)
- [Envision Washoe 2040](#)
- [Washoe County Development Code](#)
- [Washoe County Housing](#) (see “quick info” tabs for middle housing and cottage courts)

# Thank you

Kat Oakley, Planning Manager  
Washoe County CSD – Planning Division  
koakley@washoecounty.gov  
775-328-3628

