



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: November 18, 2025

DATE: October 14th, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

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SUBJECT: Introduction and first reading of an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) in Division Three—Regulation of Uses. These amendments include: modifying the title of Article 336 from “Affordable Housing Incentives” to “Housing Incentives”; adding provisions to describe the purpose of Article 336 Housing Incentives, and creating incentives for senior housing; and amending provisions to include “Senior Housing” as a residential use type in Table 110.302.05.1 and defining the term; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

And if supported, set a public hearing for the second reading and possible adoption of the ordinance for December 16, 2025. (All Commission Districts.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to introduce and conduct a first reading of an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) by modifying various sections in Division Three—Regulation of Uses in order to add a senior housing use type, define such a use type, and establish incentives for senior housing in Article 336. The proposed code amendments are described in detail beginning on page 3 of this staff report. Additional analysis can be found in Attachment C, Planning Commission staff report.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:

Vulnerable Populations: Expand appropriate housing options across our community.

PREVIOUS ACTION

October 7, 2025. The Washoe County Planning Commission (PC) reviewed the proposed amendments to Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) and voted 5-0 to recommend approval of Development Code Amendment WDCA25-0009 to the Board. In doing so, the Planning Commission was only required to make one of four possible

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findings set forth in Washoe County Code Section 110.818.15(e), which are set forth below:

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 allows 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” or “Board”) directed the Planning Program to pursue several development code amendments related to affordable and attainable housing, including amendments to update housing definitions. This set of amendments is responsive to that Board direction and focuses on the housing needs of seniors.

BACKGROUND

Housing affordability and attainability are identified in strategic planning and vision documents as one of the most pressing issues in Washoe County. Currently, 49.7% of renters in Washoe County are cost burdened (e.g. spend more than 30% of household income on housing costs). This disproportionately impacts seniors, 63.6% of whom are cost burdened. In addition to existing affordability issues, the [2024 Consensus Forecast](#) anticipates that unincorporated Washoe County will need to absorb up to a 15,757-person population increase between 2024 and 2044. Furthermore, the 2024 Consensus Forecast anticipates that the average age will see a dramatic trend upwards, with citizens over 65 years old expected to increase by about 30,000 people by 2044, accounting for 21.1% of the total population (see Figure 1). Existing affordability challenges and the projected senior population increase provide good reasons to create housing types and incentives specific to seniors.

Generalized Age Group	2024		2044	
	Population	Percent of Total	Population	Percent of Total
Preschool (Ages 0 - 4)	27,808	5.5%	33,386	5.6%
School (Ages 5 - 19)	90,770	17.9%	103,329	17.2%
Working (Ages 20-64)	291,059	57.5%	336,017	56.1%
Retired (Ages 65 and over)	96,472	19.1%	126,396	21.1%
Total Population (thousands)	506,109	100.0%	599,128	100.0%

Figure 1: Population and Percent Composition of Total Population (2024 Consensus Forecast)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed changes occur in Division 3 of WCC Chapter 110. The changes are summarized below. A draft ordinance showing all code amendments is attached as Attachment A.

Article 302 Allowed Uses and Article 304 Use Classification System

The proposed amendments add the senior housing residential use type to the development code. Senior housing developments are allowed by virtue of the federal Housing for Older Persons Act. Under the most permissive category of senior housing development within that Act are residential developments in which at least 80% of occupied units are occupied by at least one individual 55 years old or older. The proposed definition in Article 304 aligns with this federal definition and does not limit senior housing to a particular construction type. That is to say, senior housing could be single family, middle housing, or multifamily housing. Therefore, the residential use table in Article 302 will simply refer to Article 336, which establishes the standards for senior housing incentives. The senior housing definition also includes ancillary commercial uses that may be provided as amenities to residents, such as indoor sports and recreation.

Article 336 Housing Incentives

Article 336 is being established to create incentives for desired types of housing. This set of development code amendments will add a section describing the purpose of the Article and add a section for senior housing incentives. Senior housing can be any type of residential construction—single family, middle housing, or multifamily—but will be restricted to at least 80% of occupied units being occupied by a resident at least 55 years old, in alignment with federal regulations. In order to encourage the creation of senior housing, staff is proposing a 25% density increase based on whatever the base density is for that housing type in that regulatory zone. For example, a senior single-family development in the High Density Suburban (HDS) regulatory zone would be eligible for a 25% increase to the base density of 7 units per acre, for a total of 8.75 units per acre. A senior family cottage court development in the HDS regulatory zone would be eligible for a 25% increase to the base density of 9 units per acre, for a total of 11.25 units per acre. This density increase is allowed in exchange for a deed-restriction ensuring the development will be used as senior housing for a minimum of 20 years.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

A public workshop to discuss the amendments took place on Wednesday September 10, 2025. The workshop was hybrid (in person/zoom meeting) and three citizens attended. Planning representatives described the overall intent of the amendments and presented the draft changes. There was an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Questions and comments were related to deed restriction enforcement, density incentives for income-restricted housing, and the development code amendment process. No attendees expressed opposition to the proposed changes. A summary of the workshop is attached as Exhibit B of the Planning Commission staff report (Attachment C).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners introduce and conduct a first reading of the attached ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) in Division Three—Regulation of Uses by modifying the title of Article 336 from “Affordable Housing Incentives” to “Housing Incentives”; adding provisions to describe the purpose of Article 336 Housing Incentives and creating incentives for senior housing; and amending provisions to include “Senior Housing” as a residential use type in Table 110.302.05.1 and defining the term. If supported, the Board is asked to set the public hearing for second reading and possible adoption of the Ordinance for December 16, 2025.

POSSIBLE MOTION

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

“Move to introduce and conduct a first reading of Bill Number [insert Bill number provided by County Clerk], which is an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) in Division 3- Regulation of Uses. These amendments include: modifying the title of Article 336 from “Affordable Housing Incentives” to “Housing Incentives”; adding provisions to describe the purpose of Article 336 Housing Incentives, and creating incentives for senior housing; and amending provisions to include “Senior Housing” as a residential use type in Table 110.302.05.1 and defining the term; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto. Further move to schedule a public hearing for the second reading and possible adoption of the ordinance for December 16, 2025.”

Attachments:

- A. Working Copy of Proposed Ordinance
- B. Planning Commission Action Order and Resolution No. 25-13
- C. Planning Commission Staff Report for WDCA25-0009
- D. Planning Commission 10/6/25 Memo
- E. Planning Commission Staff Presentation
- F. Recording of October 7, 2025 Planning Commission Public Hearing