

Board of County Commissioners



**COMMUNITY
SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

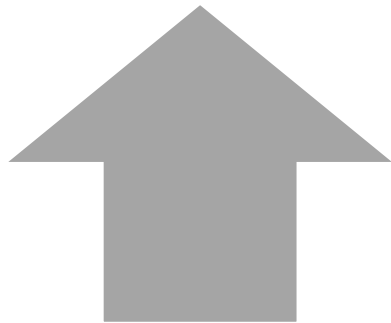
Small Unit Density Incentive

June 16th, 2026

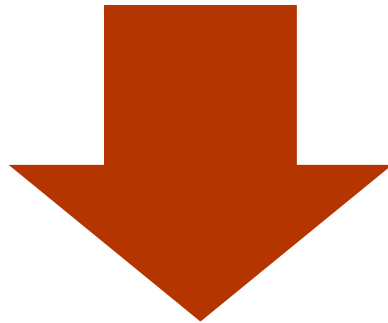
Background

- Housing supply trends not following household trends
 - Need for larger variety of housing types, particularly smaller units

Trends 1970-2022



**Medium Density
Suburban median
new home size:
1,266 sf to 2,231 sf**



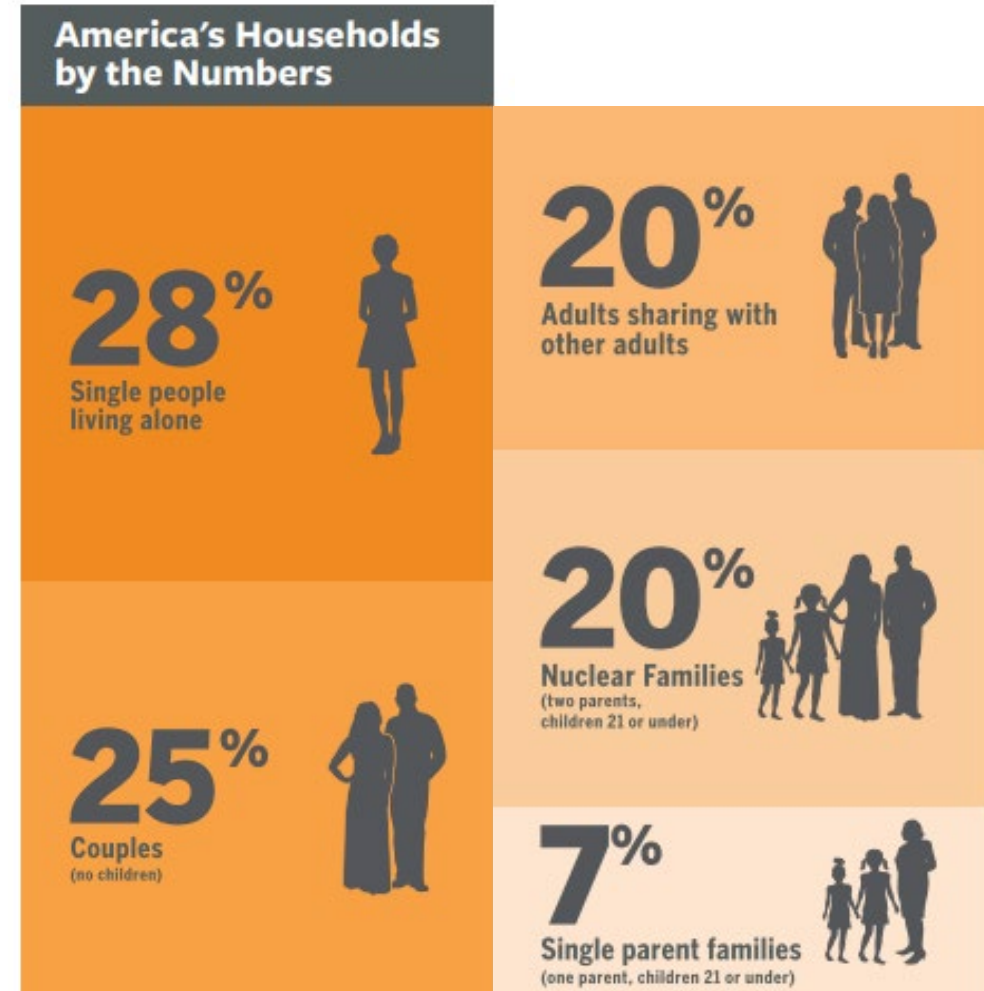
**US mean
household size:
3.14 to 2.50 people**

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

Future Trends



- **Future trend:** aging population
- Washoe County consensus forecast for seniors:
 - Currently 19.1% of population (96,472 people)
 - In 2044, 21.1% of population (126,396 people)
- Expected increase in senior population of approximately **30,000 people** (31% increase), and decrease in average household size
- Incentives proposed for affordable-by-design small units



Source: AARP Making Room-Housing for a changing nation

Article 336 Housing Incentives



- **25% density incentive** for units under **1,200 square feet** in **suburban, urban, and commercial zones** outside of the Tahoe Basin
- Units receiving density incentive must be 1,200 square feet or smaller at the time of the **initial Certificate of Occupancy**
- Approved **tentative maps** or **specific plans** that want to use this density incentive must receive new approvals
- **No variance** to the density incentive section may be granted

Traffic Generation Estimates



	Average Household Size	Overall Number of Residents	ITE Average Daily Trips	RTC Average Daily Trips
100-unit Standard Neighborhood (Neighborhood A)	2.49 people	249 people	657 trips	770 trips
125-unit Small Unit Neighborhood (WC Household Size Distribution) (Neighborhood B)	1.55 people	194 people	514 trips	710 trips
			78% of standard neighborhood	92% of standard neighborhood
125-unit Small Unit Neighborhood (Mountain West sf-per-person) (Neighborhood C)	1.63 people	204 people	538 trips	737 trips
			82% of standard neighborhood	96% of standard neighborhood

Behind the Numbers - Traffic

- Estimated traffic generation for model neighborhoods varies by method, but in all cases a small unit neighborhood would generate **less** traffic than a standard neighborhood (**78-96%** less traffic)
- Proposed density incentive: **25%**
 - More conservative than the most conservative traffic estimations due to uncertainty about the household composition of a small unit neighborhood
- Proposed developments will conduct traffic impact analyses based on Washoe County standard practices

Behind the Numbers: Building Bulk



Standard MDS Neighborhood (1970-2024)

- Average home size: 1,865 square feet
- 100-unit neighborhood
- Total building bulk: **186,500 sf**

Standard MDS Neighborhood (2019-2024)

- Average home size: 2,261 square feet
- 100-unit neighborhood
- Total building bulk: **226,000 sf**

Small Unit Neighborhood

- Average home size: 1,200 square feet
- 125-unit neighborhood
- Total building bulk: **150,000 sf**

Small unit neighborhood would have 80.4% of the building bulk of an older MDS neighborhood and 66% of the building bulk of a newer MDS neighborhood.

Findings



- Planning Commission on April 7, 2026 voted 7-0 to recommend approval.
- Must make one (1) of the following findings (PC made **all four findings**):
 1. Consistency with Master Plan.
 2. Promotes the Purpose of the Development Code.
 3. Response to Changed Conditions.
 4. No Adverse Affects.

Motion - Approval



“**Move to adopt** Ordinance Number [insert Ordinance number provided by the County Clerk], which is an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) within Article 336 Housing Incentives to add small unit density standards allowing increased density for dwelling units with a maximum unit size of 1,200 square feet and establishing requirements for utilizing the increased density; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

In making this motion, the Board is affirming the Planning Commission’s findings of fact included in the Planning Commission’s recommendation and included in Washoe County Code Section 110.818.15(e).”

Thank you

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Model Neighborhoods



- Staff compared estimated traffic impacts between three different “model neighborhoods.”

Neighborhood A

“Standard” Neighborhood

Reflects average statistics of Washoe County for people per household (2.49 people per household)

100 units
249 residents

Neighborhood B

“Small Unit” Neighborhood

Reflects a neighborhood composed of only 1 and 2 person households in proportions reflecting Washoe County household size statistics (45% 1 person and 55% 2 person)

125 units
155 residents

Neighborhood C

“Small Unit” Neighborhood

Reflects a neighborhood composed of only 1 and 2 person households in proportions reflecting average home square footage per household member (37% 1 person and 63% 2 person)

125 units
203 residents

Traffic Generation Methods

- Estimated traffic impact for the three model neighborhoods based on two traffic generation estimate methods.

ITE Estimates

Uses resident-based Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) traffic generation estimates.

- Substantiated by traffic studies across the country
- Estimates traffic impact by number of residents rather than number of dwelling units

RTC Estimates

Uses household size-based traffic generation data from the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) 2024 Washoe County Household Travel Survey.

- Recent and local data
- Weighted to represent Washoe County demographics