



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: March 18, 2025

DATE: February 14th, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

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SUBJECT: Introduction and first reading of an ordinance amending the Washoe County Code at Chapter 110 (Development Code) by adding and amending various sections in Division Three—Regulation of Uses, Division Four—Development Standards, and Division Nine—General Provisions. These updates include adding various sections to: establish minimum standards for guest quarters, cottage court developments, and employee housing; relocate lot coverage standards from article 306 to article 406; establish required findings for the approval of a common open space development; and establish minimum standards for alleyways. These updates also include amending various sections to: update the table of uses for residential use types to include middle housing, minor accessory dwelling units, guest quarters, multifamily minor, and employee housing; modify allowances in the table for duplexes and multifamily housing within regulatory zones in which those use types are already allowed; and reorganize that table; update the residential use types list to add and define multifamily minor, the middle housing use types of triplex, quadplex, and cottage court, guest quarters, and employee housing, and reorganize the list; update detached accessory structure regulations to reference lot coverage standards rather than enumerate them and to modify deed restriction requirements for connection to water and wastewater facilities; modify attached and detached accessory dwelling unit standards to regulate their use on parcels with middle housing types and specify their mutual exclusivity with guest quarters; modify Table 110.406.05.1 governing regulatory zone development standards to consolidate the separate tables into one table and to make modifications to minimum lot sizes, setbacks, and minimum lot widths for certain regulatory zones; modify the notes to Table 110.406.05.1 to add middle housing and to clarify density for single-family attached; modify common open space development standards to clarify that detention ponds and drainage facilities cannot be

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included in common open space; modify off-street parking requirements to add standards for the new housing types and modify the requirements for duplexes; modify landscaping exemptions to include middle housing types; modify residential common open space standards to add dog parks and pocket parks as permissible types of open space and require common open space for all multifamily developments with five or more units; and add or amend various definitions; 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 April 8, 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, Division Four—Development Standards, and Division Nine—General Provisions, in order to add middle housing use types, multifamily minor, guest quarters and employee housing to the development code and regulate those use types; and to update regulations related to allowed residential uses, accessory uses and structures, lot coverage, regulatory zone development standards, common open space developments, parking minimums, alleyway standards, landscaping exemptions, residential common open space standards, and various definitions. The proposed code amendments are described in detail beginning on page 7 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

February 4, 2025. 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 WDCA25-0001 to the Board. In doing so, the Planning Commission was only required to make one of four possible findings set forth in Washoe County Code Section 110.818.15(e). The Planning Commission made all four findings, 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 a set of amendments to reduce regulatory barriers to diverse types of housing. This set of amendments is responsive to that Board direction and is known as Housing Package 2.5a.

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

On November 19, 2024, the Board of County Commissioners conducted a first reading of WDCA24-0004 (Housing Affordability Package 2.5a), a previous version of these code amendments. Planning staff opted not to proceed with the second reading of that ordinance for two reasons. First, after the Planning Commission hearing, staff discovered some changes that should be made to the draft ordinance in order to increase clarity and quality of the proposed code. While these changes are generally minor in nature, they had not been presented to the Board at the first reading nor had the Board directed staff to make these changes. Further, the overall significance of the amendments to the strategic goals of the County merit a comprehensive process. Staff therefore determined that it would be preferable to bring an updated version of the ordinance to the Planning Commission (WDCA25-0001), which will maximize clarity on the content of the ordinance. These changes will be summarized in detail later in this staff report.

Secondly, during the first reading, a question arose about provisions of county code that reference providing public hearing notices to Citizen Advisory Boards (CABs). Washoe County Code (WCC) Section 110.818.20 states that notice of development code amendments will be published in a newspaper and provided to members of CABs. Similar language has existed in County Code since 1993. However, the CABs in place when this language was adopted and last amended no longer exist. Prior to August 2021, the CABs were responsible for reviewing development projects. Because those CABs were part of the development review process, they were designated to receive the notice referenced in WCC Section 110.818.20. In 2021, the BCC elected to no longer utilize CABs for providing development review and on August 17, 2021, the BCC dissolved each of the CABs that were tasked with providing input on development items. In lieu of CABs, the current neighborhood meeting process was established. The neighborhood meeting process engages interested community members (including those who may also be interested CAB members) earlier in the planning process. For code amendments, these meetings are held prior to or during the drafting process, allowing staff to address comments and concerns ahead of any public hearings and to make changes to the proposed item based on public feedback. The current CABs were created with the same names as the previous CABs, to operate with a different set of responsibilities that does not include the review of development projects. As a result, the now obsolete language of WCC 110.818.20 created an understandable confusion for citizens over noticing requirements. While the role of the CABs have changed significantly and they no longer

review development projects or code amendments, staff is taking this opportunity to notice CAB members as described in the code, as a courtesy, to ensure that there is no question or concern regarding process for these important amendments.

CHANGES SINCE WDCA24-0004 PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING

Through internal and external feedback, several changes have been made to Housing Package 2.5a since the Planning Commission heard WDCA24-0004:

- The **guest quarters definition** has been modified to require a “bedroom **and** bathroom” rather than a bedroom *or* bathroom. This will ensure that accessory structures categorized as guest quarters are limited to those that would be used for residential purposes, rather than apply to all accessory structures with a bathroom or other finished space.
- The **guest quarters regulations** have been modified to specify the maximum square footage allowances for parcels with duplexes, triplexes, or quadplexes, mirroring regulations for accessory dwelling units. This provides clarity on regulations for all development scenarios.
- The **definition of employee housing** has been modified to more clearly state that employee housing is provided as a benefit of employment, rather than “for compensation.” This change will more clearly articulate the requirement that employee housing is a benefit of employment and not to be rented to other parties.
- An **additional code standard for employee housing** has been added to require a deed restriction be recorded to limit use of the housing as employee housing. This will provide a reliable and clear mechanism to ensure the continued use of employee housing as such over time, providing clarity to property owners, staff, and the public.
- An **employee housing code standard has been modified** to provide a process to determine the common living and recreation space amenities required when there is no special use permit required (applies in the High Desert Planning Area).
- **Typographical errors and the accidental omission of the single-family attached housing use type in the Table 110.406.05.1 notes** have been fixed. The notes have been updated to ensure that the densities for all housing types are clearly addressed in each note, and that the density for single-family attached consistently matches that for middle housing. This also fixes an existing ambiguity in the subject table, where not all use types are clearly addressed in the notes. The notes have also been updated to provide clarity on the applicability of a 0-lot line setback for single family attached use types.
- **Various definitions in Art. 902 have been further modified.** These changes update references to the new master plan, update language regarding intellectual disabilities to match recent changes to state law and clarify that permanent and temporary employee housing fall under the “employee housing” use type.

- **Various grammatical and typographical corrections** have been made to provide consistent punctuation and more clarity in code provisions.

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, and young renters (15-24 years old), 61.4% of whom are cost burdened (see *Figure 1* below). 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. Diversifying housing opportunities for both rental and purchase will help provide lower cost options for these groups, supporting seniors and all parts of our community throughout the different stages of their lives.

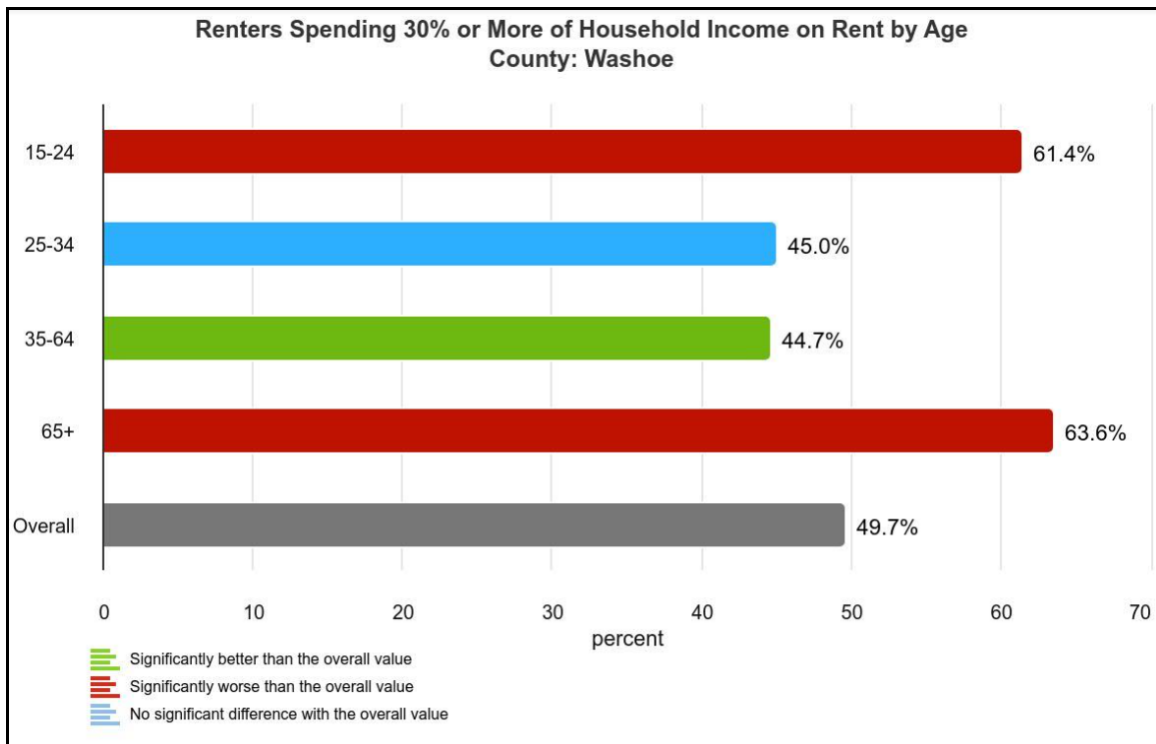


Figure 1: Cost Burdened Households by Age

Envision Washoe 2040 established the County’s commitment to work with regional partners on increasing housing variety. The Master Plan states that “*the overarching goal of the county’s approach is to ensure accessibility of adequate housing across all market segments and particularly those segments impacted by the natural imbalances that accompany growing communities.*” One such imbalance in Washoe County is the prevalence of single-family detached residential housing with very few other housing types. For example, one common suburban residential regulatory zone, Medium Density Suburban (MDS), is developed almost exclusively with detached single-family housing. The average home size in MDS is 1,858 square feet, with most homes falling between 1,400 and 2,200 square feet. Additionally, most of the single-family homes located in the MDS regulatory zone range between 3 and 4 bedrooms. These homes are certainly an

important part of Washoe County's housing supply, but serve the needs of only part of our community.

The Washoe County Strategic Plan recognizes the need to change housing policy and regulations to better serve residents. Goals in the strategic plan include “*expand appropriate housing options across (the) community*” and “*meet the needs of our growing community,*” which identifies a specific initiative to streamline planning and permitting processes that create unnecessary barriers to housing. Increasing housing diversity supports county objectives related to vulnerable populations and economic impacts, as research has shown that more housing diversity within neighborhoods increases economic resiliency in the face of circumstances such as the 2008 housing crisis.¹ Furthermore, increasing housing variety within neighborhoods provides opportunities for those who want to age in place in their neighborhood but currently do not have any alternative housing options in Washoe County. Housing Package 2.5a represents the direct implementation of strategic plan initiatives and the Truckee Meadows Regional Strategy for Housing Affordability (TMRSHA), which identifies housing diversity as a key strategy. To address the gap in available housing types, staff is proposing the addition of “missing-middle” housing.

Middle housing refers to a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types that are compatible in scale with detached single-family homes and help meet the growing demand for more attainable housing. These housing types are often referred to as “missing middle” because many communities have primarily developed single-family residential or large multi-family housing types, with limited development of other housing types such as duplexes or triplexes. The “middle” aspect refers to housing options that are between single family detached housing and large multi-family development in terms of size, density, and affordability. This set of amendments proposes adding those missing-middle housing types as uses in the development code. With the addition of middle housing, there would be opportunities to provide smaller and different housing options that can be lower cost.

This specific amendment is not focused on federally funded or deed restricted affordable housing, but instead on adding middle housing use types to the Washoe County Development Code to support the provision of housing that is more attainable in a market-rate environment. Affordable Housing Package 2.5a spans eleven articles of the development code in order to add and appropriately regulate the new housing types. It should be noted that there are no proposed changes to density allowances in residential regulatory zones, and no properties are being rezoned. In other words, **the same number of dwellings that are currently allowed by existing residential zoning would continue to be allowed.** There is no increase. Housing Package 2.5a simply expands possibilities for housing design and configuration (*see* Exhibit C of Attachment C for examples of what would be allowed under current vs proposed regulations on different parcels). Each piece of the associated amendments is addressed in turn.

¹ Chakraborty, A., & McMillan, A. (2022). Is Housing Diversity Good for Community Stability? Evidence from the Housing Crisis. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 42(2), 150-161.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0739456X18810787>

Article 300 Regulation of Uses: Title and Contents

Package 2.5a aims to enhance the variety of housing options by introducing new residential use types, including cottage courts and employee housing. To properly integrate these new housing categories within the County, Article 313, Employee and Cottage Court Housing, is being added to the development code. As a result, Article 300 is being updated to reflect the inclusion.

Article 302 Allowed Uses

The proposed amendments add new housing use types to the development code. The amendments to Article 302 are specific to the Residential Use Types and will be added to Table 110.302.05.1.

New housing types added to the residential use types table include triplex, quadplex, cottage courts, employee housing, guest quarters, and minor accessory dwelling units (which are already provided for in code but are not in the table). Triplex and quadplex buildings contain three and four dwelling units on one parcel respectively. The cottage court use type is a housing development that contains between two (2) and twelve (12) small-scale single family detached dwellings on one parcel that interact together as a small community. Employee housing is a development that provides either fully independent dwelling units or a dormitory-style living arrangement for employees of a particular company. Guest quarters are a semi-separate living space without full and independent living facilities that could be built instead of an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). Minor accessory dwelling units are ADUs under 500 square feet that are already allowed by Washoe County Code but are being added to Article 302 for consistency.



Figure 2: Example Cottage Court

Currently, residential uses are partially organized under the Family Residential category, which includes the duplex, multi family, and single-family use types. The residential uses are being reorganized with middle housing and accessory residential use type categories introduced along with the employee housing use type.

The new use types will be grouped with existing use types in the residential use table as follows:

Family Residential: Multi Family, Minor; Multi Family; Single Family, Attached; and Single Family, Detached use types.

Middle Housing: Duplex, Triplex, Quadplex, and Cottage Court use types.

Accessory Residential: Attached Accessory Dwelling, Detached Accessory Dwelling, Minor Accessory Dwelling, Guest Quarters, and Detached Accessory Structure use types.

Employee Housing use type is also being added.

The proposed new use types would be allowed in the following regulatory zones:

- **Triplex, Quadplex** – Allowed by right in High Density Suburban (HDS), Low Density Urban (LDU), Medium Density Urban (MDU), High Density Urban (HDU), and Neighborhood Commercial (NC) regulatory zones; and will require an Administrative Review Permit (AR) in Medium Density Suburban (MDS).
- **Cottage Court** – Allowed by right in High Density Suburban (HDS), Low Density Urban (LDU), Medium Density Urban (MDU), High Density Urban (HDU), and Neighborhood Commercial (NC); and will require an Administrative Review Permit (AR) in Medium Density Suburban (MDS), and an Administrative Permit (P) in Low Density Suburban (LDS).
- **Minor Accessory Dwelling** – Allowed by right in the Low Density Rural (LDR), Medium Density Rural (MDR), High Density Rural (HDR), Low Density Suburban (LDS), General Rural (GR), and General Rural Agricultural (GRA) regulatory zones, and allowed with an Administrative Review Permit (AR) in Medium Density Suburban (MDS). Further, Administrative Review is required on all parcels regardless of regulatory zone that are half an acre or smaller, which is consistent with current code regulations.
- **Guest Quarters** – Allowed by right in the Low Density Rural (LDR), Medium Density Rural (MDR), High Density Rural (HDR), Low Density Suburban (LDS), Medium Density Suburban (MDS), High Density Suburban (HDS), Low Density Urban (LDU), Medium Density Urban (MDU), High Density Urban (HDU), General Rural (GR), and General Rural Agricultural (GRA) regulatory zones.

These can be easily visualized in the abridged table below.

	LDS	MDS	HDS	LDU	MDU	HDU	NC	PR	LDR	MDR	HDR	GR	GRA
Duplex	P	AR	A	A	A	A	A						
Triplex		AR	A	A	A	A	A						
Quadplex		AR	A	A	A	A	A						
Cottage Court	P	AR	A	A	A	A	A						
Single Family, Attached	A	A	A	A	A	A	S2	P					A
Guest Quarters	A	A	A	A	A	A			A	A	A	A	A
Minor Accessory Dwelling	A	AR							A	A	A	A	A

- **Employee Housing** – Employee Housing will require a Special Use Permit (SUP) and is only allowed in the General Commercial (GC), Neighborhood Commercial (NC), and Tourist Commercial (TC) regulatory zones. Employee Housing Dormitories will not be permitted within residential regulatory zones.

	NC	GC	TC
Employee Housing	S	S	S

These new housing use types can provide more housing options county-wide that may be of lower cost and better serve parts of the population compared to traditional single-family detached homes. Adding different types of allowed residential uses can help support housing types that are more economically accessible to a broader range of residents, including young professionals, first-time homebuyers, retirees, and those simply seeking smaller living spaces. Additionally, some of the middle housing types such as cottage court developments share land and infrastructure costs, which can lower the cost of housing creation. It's important to note that there are no proposals in Housing Package 2.5a that will result in any increase in allowable density. For example, a proposal for a duplex would require the same acreage as two single family attached residences in the same regulatory zone.

Article 304 Use Classification System

The purpose of Article 304 is to define all use types referenced in Article 302. With the introduction of middle housing use types, it is necessary to update Article 304 to include definitions for these new use types. As part of this update, the following definitions have been added or modified: guest quarters, multi-family minor, multi-family, group homes, employee housing, and middle housing. Middle housing encompasses duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and cottage courts.

Several cleanup items were also addressed, including updating terminology by replacing "families" with "households" throughout the article and relocating specific code requirements from the use definitions to more appropriate sections within the development code.

Article 306 Accessory Uses and Structures

Article 306 provides comprehensive regulations for accessory uses and structures. This article covers a wide range of accessory buildings, including both attached and detached accessory dwellings, as well as the guest quarters use type. A guest quarters is an accessory structure or space that can be used for semi-separate habitation but contains no kitchen. This use type is a direct response to public feedback received during Housing Package 1, which made code updates specific to ADUs. The guest quarters use type will provide a needed option for semi-independent living on properties that may not be able to have a fully independent ADU. The resident of a guest quarters can have an independent living space while still being part of the same household as residents of the main unit. This provides Washoe County residents more options for aging in place or other housing needs. Other updates to this article also add ADU standards for parcels with middle housing types.

Additionally, all lot coverage requirements are being relocated to a more suitable chapter ensuring that the development code is organized and accessible.

Article 313 Employee and Cottage Court Housing

Article 313 is a newly established article to provide comprehensive regulations for cottage courts and employee housing use types. The regulations within this article align closely with the established standards for other housing use types found throughout the Washoe County Development Code. For cottage court developments, the regulations encompass a variety of essential requirements, including maximum dwelling unit size limitations and standards for covered parking, common open space, and overall site orientation. The standards for employee housing include prohibitions on the storage of inoperable vehicles, requirements for on-site property managers, specifications for facilities such as bathrooms and kitchens, and common space requirements.

Article 406 Building Placement Standards

Article 406 governs setbacks, lot width, lot area, height, and dwelling units per acre (du/ac). Currently, these requirements are spread across six different tables in the development code. To enhance clarity and ease of use, staff is consolidating these tables into a single, easy-to-read table.

As part of the update, the minimum lot widths for the Medium Density Suburban (MDS), Medium Density Suburban/4 (MDS4), High Density Suburban (HDS), Low Density Urban (LDU), Medium Density Urban (MDU), and High Density Urban (HDU) regulatory zones are being reduced. Modifying these requirements would allow the development of different types of housing to be more feasible. Since Washoe County's standards are almost exclusively geared towards single-family residential, the lot widths and setbacks in the development code create challenges for the development of different housing types. With the addition of the new housing types, adjustments are needed to make the regulatory zone standards appropriate for more than one housing type. This results in a more adaptable regulatory zone that can respond to market demand for various housing types.

Additionally, the lot area requirements for the Medium Density Urban (MDU) and High Density Urban (HDU) regulatory zones are being adjusted to align with the standards for Low Density Urban areas. These changes aim to create a more consistent approach to lot size regulations across the urban regulatory zones.

Article 408 Common Open Space Development

Developers of many housing types, including single-family attached housing, undergo the subdivision process using common open space development. This allows for modifications to the standard lot size and setback requirements; and thus, allows more flexibility in site design. As part of package 2.5a, required findings for common open space developments are being proposed. These findings are: Preserve or Provide Open Space, Protect Natural and Scenic Resources, Achieve a More Efficient Use of Land, Minimize Road Building, and Encourage a Sense of Community.

Staff recognizes that developers of the new housing types proposed in Housing Package 2.5a will often use the common open space process. Adding required findings for the approval of a common open space development ensures that the development will provide clear benefits to residents rather than having these benefits as afterthoughts.

Additionally, detention basins, retention basins, and other required drainage facilities will be prohibited from being used as common open space.

Article 410 Parking and Loading

With the introduction of middle housing use types to the Washoe County development code, it is important for parking requirements to be updated and clarified for the new use types. The proposed amendment aims to modify the existing parking requirements for duplexes, aligning them with the newly established parking standards for middle housing use types. The updated parking requirements are outlined below:

	Proposed
Duplex	1 per dwelling unit, which must be covered
Triplex	1 per dwelling unit, which must be covered
Quadplex	1 per dwelling unit, which must be covered
Cottage Cluster	1 per dwelling unit, which must be covered
Employee Housing Dormitory	0.25 spaces per approved occupant

Additionally, recognizing the evolving nature of residential developments, Housing Package 2.5a includes the establishment of alleyway standards. These standards will give developers the option of creating residential subdivisions with garages being positioned along the alleyways.

Article 412 Landscaping

The purpose of Article 412, Landscaping, is to establish regulations for the development, installation, and maintenance of landscaped areas within Washoe County, while still allowing for creative landscape design. Currently single-family residential use types are exempt from these landscaping requirements. With the introduction of middle housing use types, staff is proposing to extend this exemption to include middle housing as well. This approach aims to simplify compliance while encouraging a variety of housing types. Landscaping requirements can still be applied as appropriate for middle housing developments through the subdivision process, just as they can for single-family subdivisions. Landscaping will be required for employee housing and continue to be required for multifamily housing.

Article 432 Open Space Standards

Residential common open space standards are identified in WCC Section 110.432.15, which specifies the types of common open space permissible within residential developments. As part of package 2.5a, new types of residential common open space, such as dog parks and pocket parks, are being added to the list of allowed common open space. These additions offer greater flexibility for smaller parcels and uniquely shaped parcels.

Additionally, the threshold for requiring common open space for multi-family use types is being lowered from twelve (12) dwelling units to five (5) dwelling units. Staff recognizes that this change may result in higher costs for multi-family, minor developments; however, it also ensures that residents of these smaller developments have

access to similar amenities as those in larger multi-family communities. This change emphasizes a commitment to providing equitable amenities regardless of number of units.

Article 902 Definitions

With the proposed changes in package 2.5a it is important to establish clear definitions for the new use types to ensure clarity and consistency. This amendment package not only modifies existing definitions for housing types found in Article 304, but it also introduces new definitions related to middle housing types.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed changes occur in Divisions 3, 4, and 9 of WCC Chapter 110. The changes are summarized below.

Residential Use Types and Definitions:

- Adding new housing types which include triplex, quadplex, cottage courts, employee housing, guest quarters, and minor accessory dwelling units.
- Adding and modifying definitions for guest quarters, multi-family minor, multi-family, group homes, employee housing, and middle housing. Middle housing encompasses duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and cottage courts.
- Adding guest quarters standards to Article 306.
- Adding ADU standards for parcels with middle housing use types to Article 306.
- Introducing Article 313, Employee and Cottage Court Housing. This article establishes regulations for the Employee Housing and Cottage Court Housing use types.
- Updating the definitions in Article 304 and 902 for the new use types.

Building Placement and Lot Standards

- Combining six charts into one, easy-to-read chart.
- Modifying some minimum lot widths, setbacks, and lot sizes.
- Specifying densities for new housing types.

Common Open Space Standards

- Adding required findings for common open space developments, which are: Preserve or Provide Open Space, Protect Natural and Scenic Resources, Achieve a More Efficient Use of Land, Minimize Road Building, and Encourage a Sense of Community.
- Prohibiting the use of drainage facilities, detention basins and retention basins as common open space.

Parking and Loading Requirements:

- Adding parking requirements for middle housing use types and employee housing.

Landscaping:

- Proposing to exempt middle housing use types from landscaping requirements.

Open Space Standards:

- Adding dog parks and pocket parks as allowed common open space.
- Reducing the threshold requiring common open space for multi-family use types from twelve (12) dwelling units to five (5) dwelling units

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 June 24, June 26, and July 1, 2024. The meetings were scheduled to take place from 5:00-6:00 pm, but due to public interest the meetings ended at approximately 6:30 pm. The June 24 meeting was scheduled to be in person but transitioned to an online only meeting due to the Reno Rodeo. This meeting ultimately ended up as a hybrid in-person/zoom meeting to accommodate community needs. Seventy-one (71) members of the public attended digitally and 14 people attended in person. The June 26 meeting was held as a Zoom meeting, and 55 members of the public attended. The July 1 meeting was scheduled as an in-person meeting at the County Complex, in the Commission Chambers. Approximately 41 people attended this meeting.

Questions and comments were related to staff's initial proposal to remove the two-story height limit in Spanish Springs and North Valleys planning areas, types of housing included in the amendments, whether apartments would be allowed, and substantial discussion on infrastructure upgrades and requirements, including impacts to schools, US 395, other roadways, and sewer and water infrastructure. There were also discussions related to bunkhouses (now referred to as employee housing dormitories), their use/intent, and the proposed standards associated with them. Summaries of both meetings are attached as Exhibit B to the Planning Commission staff report (Attachment C).

PUBLIC INPUT RESPONSE

Throughout the public process, staff received numerous comments regarding the proposed changes. There were concerns about the initial proposal to remove the two-story limit in Spanish Springs, concerns regarding infrastructure, and concerns regarding how large the package was as initially proposed. In response to the concern regarding Package 2.5a being too much to consider under one set of amendments, staff removed proposed amendments to Articles 208, 214, 216, 310, and 402 from this set of code amendments. Some of the changes to those articles will be brought to the Planning Commission for consideration under a different ordinance at a future date. Additionally, staff made many changes to the currently proposed amendments based on public feedback. In addition to some of the changes since WDCA24-0004 described earlier in this staff report, a quick summary of all that has changed based on public feedback is outlined below.

- **Minor ADU Consistency:** Added minor ADUs to the use table in Article 302 for consistency with Article 304.
- **Terminology Update:** Renamed "bunkhouse" to "employee housing" for clarity regarding its use and character.
- **Cottage Court Clarification:** Specified that cottages within a cottage court are located on a single parcel.
- **ADU Terminology Adjustment:** Removed the term "granny flats" from ADU descriptions in Article 304.
- **Guest Quarters Definition Update:** Revised the guest quarters definition to match the language used in other definitions, specifying whether they are attached or detached.
- **ADU Standards Streamlining:** Removed redundant language within ADU standards.
- **Square Footage Alignment:** Aligned the maximum square footage for guest quarters with that of ADUs.
- **Cottage Court Parking Flexibility:** Broadened the options for where parking can be placed within cottage court developments.
- **Community Structures in Cottage Courts:** Clarified the allowances for community structures within cottage court standards.
- **Sewer Requirement for Cottage Courts:** Added a requirement for cottage court developments to be served by sewer systems.
- **Employee Housing Requirements:** Introduced additional requirements for employee housing developments, separating general standards from those specific to employee housing dormitories.
- **Spanish Springs:** Removed Spanish Springs-specific changes from the proposed changes. Specifically, the two-story height limit for commercial centers in Spanish Springs will remain in the code. No Spanish Springs specific changes are proposed.

To address community concerns regarding infrastructure, staff met with regional agencies who regulate and manage infrastructure throughout the ordinance drafting and editing process. Staff confirmed with all agencies that there are no significant concerns about infrastructure due to the proposed code amendments. While there are region-wide infrastructure challenges and a complex regulatory environment for addressing those challenges (*see* the Regional Form and Coordination and the Transportation Elements of [Envision Washoe 2040](#) for a thorough discussion of this topic), this set of development code amendments does not increase the allowed density in any residential regulatory zone (*see* Exhibit C of Attachment C for examples of what would be allowed currently vs under the proposed regulations on different parcels). The options for types of housing development would be expanded, but allowed densities remain the same. Further, developments larger than a few units will continue to require a discretionary review in almost all circumstances outside of the urban regulatory zones. In infrastructure planning, regional agencies use Washoe County's zoning or master plan designations to anticipate future housing and resulting infrastructure impacts. Since the densities allowed within each regulatory zone and master plan category will remain the same, there is no anticipated impact to infrastructure or infrastructure planning from these amendments. Infrastructure will continue to expand and be improved as the region grows, whether that growth comes in the form of single-family detached housing or middle housing.

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) by modifying various sections in Division Three—Regulation of Uses, Division Four—Development Standards, and Division Nine—General Provisions, in order to add middle housing use types, multifamily minor, guest quarters and employee housing and regulate those use types; and to update regulations related to allowed residential uses, accessory uses and structures, lot coverage, regulatory zone development standards, common open space developments, parking minimums, alleyway standards, landscaping exemptions, residential common open space standards, and various definitions. If supported, the Board is asked to set the public hearing for second reading and possible adoption of the Ordinance for April 8, 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) by modifying Divisions 3, 4, and 9 in order to add middle housing use types, multifamily minor, guest quarters and employee housing and regulate those use types; and to update regulations related to allowed residential uses, accessory uses and structures, lot coverage, regulatory zone development standards, common open space developments, parking minimums, alleyway standards, landscaping exemptions, residential common open space standards, and various definitions; 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 April 8, 2025.”

Attachments:

- A. Working Copy of Proposed Ordinance
- B. Planning Commission Action Order and Resolution No. 25-03
- C. Planning Commission Staff Report for WDCA25-0001
- D. Planning Commission Staff Presentation
- E. Recording of February 4, 2025, Planning Commission Public Hearing
- F. Public Comment