



Community Development Agency

Planning Department

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: March 10th, 2026

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: **Brian Foss, Planning Director**

SUBJECT: Ordinance to add Section 12.03.151 to the Nevada County Code Title 12 Zoning Regulations to establish health and safety standards, permitting and certification requirements, and site development standards allowing for recreational vehicles as an additional residential unit on developed properties subject to the permitting and standards and amending the definition of an RV and amending Tables 12.02.210B and Table 12.02.030.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the Ordinance.

FUNDING: The proposed ordinance would not require any funding.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Ordinance with Attachment
2. Planning Commission Staff Report
3. Planning Commission Minutes for November 13, 2025

BACKGROUND: At the 2024 Board Workshop, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors directed the Community Development Agency to identify updates to the Nevada County Code to allow for the development of alternative housing types in support of the Housing Board Objective. Specifically, the Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Department to develop an Ordinance to allow Tiny Homes on Wheels (THOWs) and to reestablish and redefine the County's Title 25 Limited Density Rural Owner-Built Housing Regulations. Both Tiny Homes on Wheels and Title 25 regulations were adopted by the Board on January 14, 2025.

Throughout the Tiny Homes on Wheels project, the most consistent comment received was that the Tiny Homes on Wheels ordinance was still too limiting and that the County should consider additional alternative housing. As a result, the Board directed staff to follow up with a review and a potential ordinance that might allow alternative housing types that are not traditionally considered permanent housing.

This direction is in alignment with a 2025 Nevada County Board of Supervisors Objective to adapt to the needs of the community to provide innovative housing opportunities to Nevada County's low income and most vulnerable resident populations.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE: The definition of a "recreational vehicle" (RV) is established under State law. The definition would include: "A motor home, travel trailer, truck camper, or camping trailer, with or without motive power, designed for human habitation for recreational, emergency, or other occupancy that is structurally sound, safe to occupy and protect occupants from the elements." The proposed ordinance would require

residential RVs to maintain valid registration with the Department of Motor Vehicles and comply with ANSI/NFPA safety standards. Permitting requirements would be similar to the existing standards for Tiny Homes on Wheels.

Residential use of an RV would be authorized through a Zoning Compliance and Building Permit review and a Certificate of Use permit. This permit would be required to be renewed every two years and would involve inspections from applicable Community Development Agency departments. Additionally, building permits for grading and electrical work, as well as Environmental Health permits for well and septic systems, would be required as part of the review and approval.

Residential RVs would be permitted only as additional dwelling units on a developed site, as they are required to connect to existing infrastructure. Eligible parcels would be at least three acres in size to ensure adequate space for both well and septic systems. Only one residential RV would be allowed per parcel, and all units would have to comply with the setback requirements of the applicable zoning district. Residential RVs would be allowed in RA Single-Family zoning districts, as well as all rural zoning districts (AG, AE, FR, TPZ).

In addition, residential RVs would be subject to specific design and construction standards including the following:

- The undercarriage, including wheels and axles, would be required to be screened from view with fixed, solid materials at all times during habitation.
- RV Units would be placed on a paved or graveled surface, and wheels would have to remain on the vehicle and the tires would have to remain inflated. The RV would have to be properly tied down, anchored, and/or stabilized.
- At elevations above 3,200 feet, RVs would have to be either constructed to meet snow load requirements or placed beneath a ramada that meets these standards.
- All residential RVs must meet the minimum requirements for habitable structures, including functional heating, lighting, hot and cold water, kitchen facilities, a toilet, and a sink. Fire extinguishers and provisions for solid waste disposal would also be required.
- Any modifications to the RV would require a American National Standards Institute (ANSI) inspection.
- As part of the application process, applicants would be required to submit a Fire Protection Plan that identifies evacuation routes and includes a fuel management strategy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMENTS RECEIVED: The County recognizes the importance of community engagement and the benefits of collaborative efforts with the public to ensure the amendments are transparent and easy to understand. To facilitate community engagement, the Planning Department presented the alternative housing work plan to the Board of Supervisors on April 22, 2025, and held a community meeting on May 27, 2025, to receive community input to shape the Recreational Vehicle Dwelling Ordinance. To further engage the community, a survey was conducted from July 11, 2025, to August 10, 2025, which resulted in approximately 1,900 responses which were used as guidance for developing the ordinance. As an example of the survey results, 72% of respondents believe that RVs, motorcoaches, cabover campers, converted buses (etc.) should be considered a viable solution to the ongoing housing crisis in Nevada County, so long as they meet all applicable health and safety standards. The public review period of the draft ordinance commenced on August 20, 2025, and closed on September 22, 2025. Another public workshop was held at the Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Hall on September 9, 2025. Meetings were held with the South County Municipal Advisory Council on September 15th and the Penn Valley Municipal Advisory Council on September 23, 2025. The comments received varied widely from support of the ordinance to full opposition of the ordinance and some suggested revisions to the proposed standards. The comments received are attached.

ORDINANCE MODIFICATIONS BASED ON PUBLIC INPUT:

Staff made modifications to the Ordinance based on comments received and include the following:

- Removal of the Administrative Development Permit requirement for initial approval. Instead, the RV's are proposed to be permitted through a site plan and building permit review process that will reduce costs.
- The R1 zone district was eliminated from the allowable zoning districts. In reviewing the potential properties in the County that met the criteria within the R1 zone district only 87 parcels were eligible and 27 of those were developed with residences. This modification addresses some of the concerns about RV dwelling use in more dense neighborhoods.
- Clarification that RV's must have dedicated access separate from the primary dwelling to hot and cold potable water, kitchen, toilet and lavatory facilities.
- Prohibit storage of combustible materials under the RV unit.

Planning Commission Hearing November 13, 2025: A Planning Commission hearing was held on November 13, 2025 to consider the draft ordinance. The Planning Commission deliberated on the matter and ultimately voted 3-2 to recommend approval and adoption by the Board of Supervisors. At the meeting the Planning Commission requested that the Board of Supervisors be informed on three issues including if the RV units would qualify for insurance, verification that the Fire Districts did not have any comments or concerns with the draft ordinance and whether the Code Compliance Department has the staffing and capabilities to enforce.

Insurance:

Since the RV units are not traditional stick-built dwellings and are mobile, standard homeowners insurance is not available to owners. However, it appears a number of insurance companies offer insurance for "full time" Recreational Vehicle living which provides similar coverage to traditional homeowner insurance.

Full-time RV insurance is designed for owners who reside in their RV as their primary residence for six months or more annually, offering homeowner-style protections such as personal liability, property coverage, and emergency lodging. Standard policies cover road risks only, while full-timer coverage protects the owner whether driving or parked. This is needed if the motorhome serves as the primary residence, especially when renting it out or living in an HOA community.

Full-time RV insurance is designed to protect owners who use their RV as either a primary residence or live in it for six months out of the year. Full-time insurance is similar to home insurance—it covers personal liability, injuries, property damage, and other losses that may happen while the RV is parked. Similar to traditional homeowners insurance the full time RV insurance will cover personal belongings, bodily injury and property damage, medical payments if someone is hurt in the RV, damage to the unit from fire or other weather events (not including flood or earthquake damage) and adjacent structure damage such as sheds, decks, porches or carports.

Fire District Review:

All of the Fire Districts in Nevada County were routed the draft ordinance for review and comment in July 2025. No adverse comments or concerns were received. Additionally, the Planning Department reached out to all of the districts again in January 2026 requesting any comments regarding the proposed ordinance. Two districts responded with clarifying questions regarding the ordinance but no District provided any suggested changes to the ordinance language or expressed concerns with the allowance of living in an RV full time as long and standard fire protection measures and defensible space standards were applied as required by the ordinance.

Code Compliance:

A number of concerns were raised that the County Code Compliance department would not have the staffing to respond to complaints about unpermitted RV's and would not be able to enforce the new ordinance. The Code Compliance division has reviewed the ordinance and has estimated the time and staffing needed to enforce the ordinance should it pass. The Code Compliance Director states that the department could respond to complaints and enforce the ordinance given existing staffing and caseloads. The department responds to complaints for unpermitted RV's currently. The remedy to the complaints is to have the owner remove or relocate the RV. The new ordinance would allow a path to compliance for unpermitted RV's to stay in place and as a residence in many circumstances rather than removing the RV all together.

SUMMARY: The Nevada County Board of Supervisors directed staff to develop an ordinance to allow recreational vehicles (RVs) as residential dwelling units to expand affordable housing options. The ordinance would require DMV registration, compliance with ANSI/NFPA safety standards, and approval through a renewable Certificate of Use permit with inspections. RVs would be limited to one per parcel of at least three acres in size, allowed in specific single-family and rural zoning districts, and subject to design, safety, and habitability standards, including snow load compliance and fire protection planning. Community input guided development of the ordinance, which has been found exempt from CEQA review.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Board of Supervisors take the following action:

- I. Project Action: Adopt the attached Ordinance, adding Nevada County Code Title 12: Zoning Regulations, Chapter 3: Specific Land Uses, Section 12.03.151: Recreational Vehicle Dwelling, to establish health and safety standards, permitting and certification requirements, and site development standards to allow Recreational Vehicles as dwelling units within those zoning districts that would otherwise allow traditional built housing of the same type; amending the definition of Recreational Vehicle in Section 12.06.010; and amending Tables 12.02.210.B and 12.02.030 to allow recreational vehicles as dwellings in the Rural and Single-Family zoning districts making finding A.
 - A. The Board of Supervisors finds the project categorically exempt pursuant to Sections 15303, and 15305 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines as the project does not increase density and permits recreational vehicles as dwellings within those zoning districts that would otherwise allow traditional built housing of the same type.

Item Initiated and Approved by: Brian Foss, Planning Director

Submittal Date: 2/23/26