

Alternative Housing/RV Dwelling Unit Ordinance

Board of Supervisors

March 10, 2026

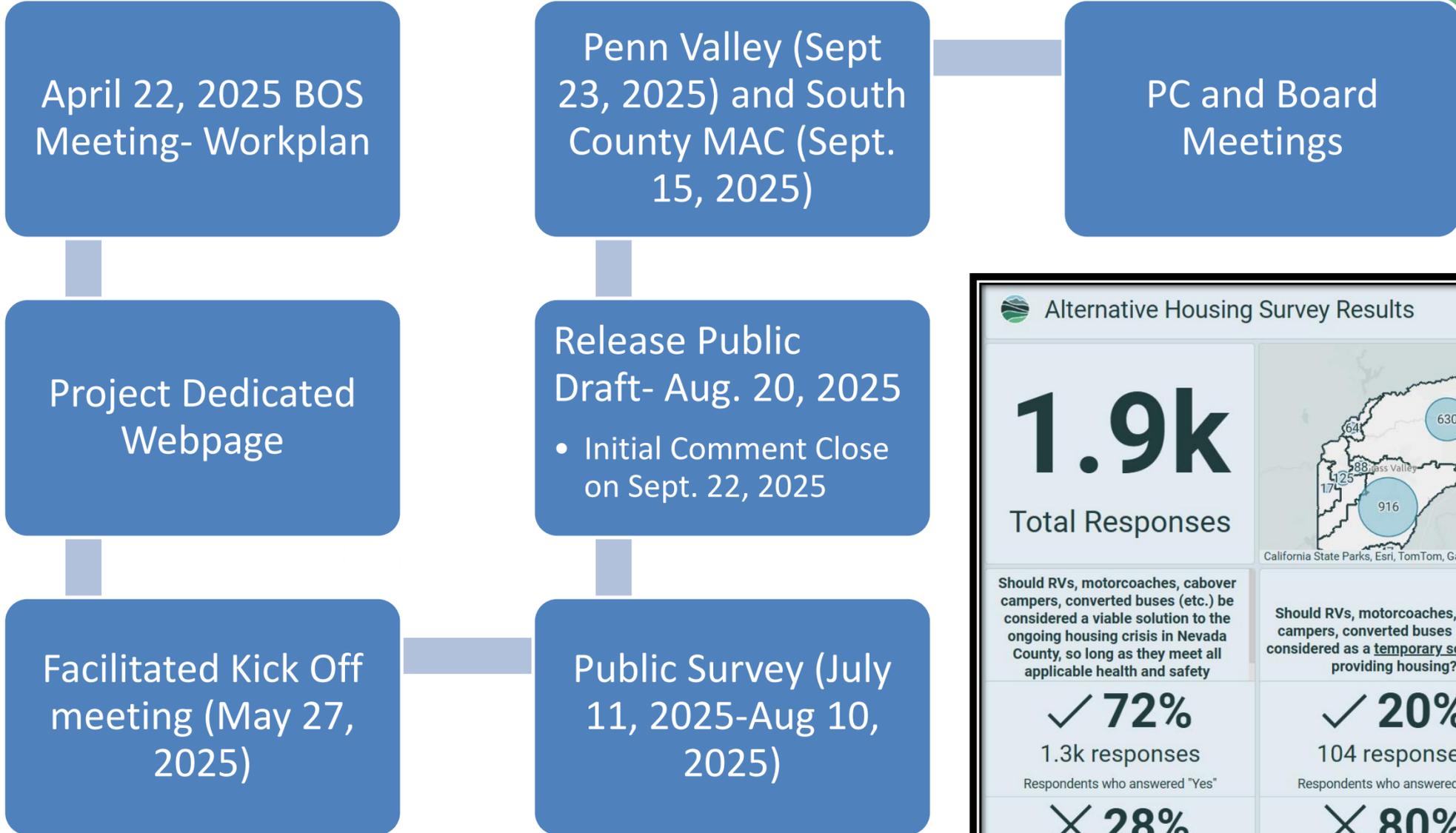


Background and Need

2024/25 Board Workshops

- Housing Board Objective
- **Board direction to identify alternative housing types to support housing development**
 - Reduce development costs
 - Increase housing supply
 - Provide regulatory flexibility
- **January 14, 2025 Board Meeting**
 - Title 25: Limited Density Owner Built Housing
 - Tiny Homes on Wheels Ordinance
- **Ongoing Housing Crisis**

Project Milestones



Ordinance Requirements

- **Recreational Vehicle Definition**: based on State Law definition; requires DMV registration and must meet safety standards. (ANSI/NFPA)
- **Standards**: Similar to Tiny Homes on Wheels. Permitting structure similar to RV use for Urgent Care but provides 2-year renewal verses every 6-months for Urgent Care.
- **Permitting**: Zoning Compliance and Building Permit issuance. Renewable every two years, requires inspections. Building Permits for grading, electrical EH permits for well/septic.
- **Zoning/Density**:
 - Allowed as an accessory dwelling unit only, due to the requirement to use existing infrastructure.
 - Parcels must be 3-acres or greater (min. parcel size for well and septic)
 - RA, and all Rural zoning districts (AG, AE, FR, TPZ)

Ordinance Requirements

- **Inspections**: conducted by CDA Departments upon installation and renewals
- **Number of RV's**: No more than 1 RV per parcel and must meet applicable setbacks for the Zoning District.
- **Screening**: the undercarriage, including wheels and axles shall be concealed from view by screening that is solid and affixed at all times during habitation.
- **Foundation**: Paved or graveled surface. Wheels must remain on vehicle and tires inflated. Tie downs, anchors and/or stabilizers required.
- **Wind and Snow Loads**: Ramada/cover above 3,200 feet elevation
- **Habitability**: Heat, lighting, hot and cold water, kitchen, toilet and sink required. Fire extinguishers, solid waste provisions required
- **Modifications to RV**: Require an ANSI trained inspector
- **Fire Protection Plan**: evacuation routes, fuels management plan

Public Comments

- Numerous Comments received from overall support to opposition with concerns.
- Health and Safety (septic, trash, fire safety)
 - Dedicated utilities required (either contained within RV or dedicated structure separate from main house)
 - Can hook-up to existing septic system or develop new system
 - Fire Requirements – water supply, defensible space, evacuation routes, driveway standards
- Code Enforcement
 - Complaint basis or observed health and safety concerns
 - Many unpermitted RVs currently - [Path to Compliance](#)

Revisions to Ordinance

- 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. Potential properties in the County that met the criteria within the R1 zone district were only 87 parcels 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

- Planning Commission Heard the project on November 13, 2025
 - Recommended approval of the Ordinance 3-2 vote
 - Clarifications:
 - Fire District Review
 - Insurance
 - Code Enforcement

Recommendation

- I. Environmental Action: Recommend that the Board of Supervisors find 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.
- II. Project Action: Recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the 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 12.02.220.B and 12.02.030 to allow recreational vehicles as dwellings in the Rural and Residential Agriculture zoning districts.

Panel Discussion

Code Case Management Improvements

- Earlier identification of complex cases that warrant elevated enforcement tools
- Proactive management of older and long-standing cases
- Clearer compliance pathways for property owners
- Improved prioritization and oversight

Panel Discussion

Code Case Metrics

2024

- 248 cases opened / 230 cases closed
- 93% closure rate

2025

- 290 cases opened / 252 cases closed
- 87% closure rate

Staffing & Code Case Management

- Average caseload: ~89 cases per officer
- All open cases actively inspected and managed
- No dormant or unassigned cases
- Multiple enforcement pathways in use

<https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/4102/Alternative-Housing>

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