

Alternative Housing/RV Dwelling Unit Ordinance

Board of Supervisors

July 28, 2026



NEVADA
COUNTY
CALIFORNIA



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
- **Planning Commission November 13, 2025**
 - Recommended Approval 3-2
- **Board of Supervisors March 10, 2026**
 - Direction to staff for Revisions to the Ordinance

Board Direction on March 10, 2026

- I. Continue the item to a future Board of Supervisors meeting (Summer 2026) with direction as follows:
 - Revise the proposed ordinance to be included in the current Recreation Vehicle Use and Temporary Occupancies Section (12.03.150) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow RV use based on “hardship” qualification.
 - Develop criteria for “hardship” qualification for temporary occupancy working with HHSA and Housing Authority, Housing Ad hoc Committee as needed.
 - Explore Pilot Program pros and cons options including whether or not to include sunset options of the ordinance

Amendments to Ordinance

- **Amendments incorporated into existing Section 12.03.150**
 - The proposed language has been inserted into existing section (12.03.150) of the Zoning Ordinance. Some minor modifications have been made to that section in order to integrate the new language, the requirements previously outlined in the ordinance was not substantially changed.
- **Income Qualifications:**
 - Long term use be occupied by a person or persons that meet the 50% Average Median Income limits based on household size for Nevada County.
 - The Average Median Income level for Nevada County is approximately \$89,882 which would put the 50% income level at \$44,941 for an individual.
 - The amended ordinance requires documentation of a tenant's household income through verifiable financial records.
 - The property owner signs a statement declaring to rent or provide the RV dwelling only to tenants that meet the eligibility criteria.

Amendments to Ordinance

- **Three (3) acre minimum parcel size**
 - The 3-acre minimum requirement was removed from the revised ordinance language based on discussion at the March 10, 2026, BOS meeting. However, this requirement can be re-instated based on the direction from the Board.
- **Pilot Program/Sunset Clause Pros and Cons**

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

- Initial Ordinance: Numerous Comments received from overall support to opposition with concerns. (±350 total)
- Approximately 75 comments received since last hearing date
 - 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**

Pilot Program/Sunset Clause - Pros

- Reduces risk: The County and Community can test a new ordinance before making it permanent. The effectiveness of the ordinance can be evaluated, and successes and challenges can be identified.
- Allows Real-world Evaluation: The actual impacts and effectiveness of the ordinance can be measured based on real word examples versus speculation and assumptions.
- Provides flexibility: The County can modify the ordinance based on lessons learned from the initial implementation of the ordinance.
- Encourages public engagement: Residents and stakeholders can provide feedback to the County during the trial period.
- Automatically ends if unsuccessful: The sunset clause prevents ineffective regulations from remaining in force indefinitely.

Pilot Program/Sunset Clause - Cons

- Creates uncertainty: Property owners, developers, and investors may hesitate if the rules could expire. Substantial financial investment is needed to prepare a site to accommodate the Recreational Vehicle, and some property owners may not want to invest if the allowances are revoked.
- May limit participation: People may not invest time or money in a temporary program.
- Administrative time and costs: Staff must collect data, monitor the program, and prepare reports to monitor the effectiveness and challenges with the ordinance.
- Short timeframes may not show full impacts: A limited timeframe of implementation may not show the true results and/or impacts of the ordinance. Investment in the development can take time and the actual results of the ordinance may not be fully realized in a short timeframe.

Pilot Program/Sunset Clause - Cons

- Pressure near expiration. As the sunset date approaches, there may be uncertainty or a rush to approve projects before the rules expire.
- Enforcement Challenges: Some RV's may be permitted under the pilot program but once the pilot program expires the enforcement of permitted RV's and unpermitted RV's can become challenging. One property may be allowed to keep an RV for long term use whereas the neighboring property would not be allowed based on timing. This can cause a feeling of unfairness and can be difficult to regulate especially as time goes on and legal non-conforming RV's become harder to track.

Pilot Program/Sunset Clause - Language

The purpose of this pilot program is to allow temporary implementation of Recreational Vehicles as long term housing in order to evaluate its effectiveness, impacts, and administrative requirements prior to consideration of permanent adoption.

This pilot program shall remain in effect for a period of [24 months] from the effective date of this ordinance, unless extended, modified, or repealed by the Board of Supervisors. Upon expiration, the provisions of this pilot program shall be automatically repealed, and all requirements of the underlying zoning district shall resume full force and effect. Any permits issued within the pilot program timeframe are considered valid and the continued use of the RV is considered legal and may remain in accordance with all approved conditions and standards of the original permit.

Pilot Program/Sunset Clause – Staff Direction

The Planning Department shall monitor implementation of the pilot program and prepare a report for review by the Board of Supervisors no later than 6 months prior to the sunset date.

The report shall include:

- *Number of applications reviewed and processed*
- *Number issued permits and RV's occupied since implementation*
- *Impacts on neighborhoods, aesthetics, transportation, public services, or other relevant factors*
- *Community feedback and applicant input*
- *Administrative or enforcement challenges*
- *Recommendations for modification, expansion, formal adoption, or termination*

Recommendation

- 1. Project Action: Recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the Ordinance amending Nevada County Code Title 12: Zoning Regulations, Chapter 3: Specific Land Uses, Section 12.03.150: 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 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.



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CALIFORNIA

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



Parcels by Zoning District in Each Supervisor District - No Minimum Parcel Size						
District	AG	FR	RA	TPZ	R1	Sum
1	3158	171	3907	18	1852	9106
2	1973		2538		4799	9310
3	45		1942	2	1029	3018
4	5982	815	1438	23	3087	11345
5	670	2522	86	416	814	4508
Sum	11828	3508	9911	459	11581	37287

Parcels by Zoning District in Each Supervisor District - Greater than 3 acres other than R1						
District	AG	FR	RA	TPZ	R1 (no min)	Sum
1	2049	164	1700	16	1852	5781
2	1604		1318		4799	7721
3	24		501	1	1029	1555
4	4942	730	513	22	3087	9294
5	583	2052	4	388	814	3841
Sum	9202	2946	4036	427	11581	28192

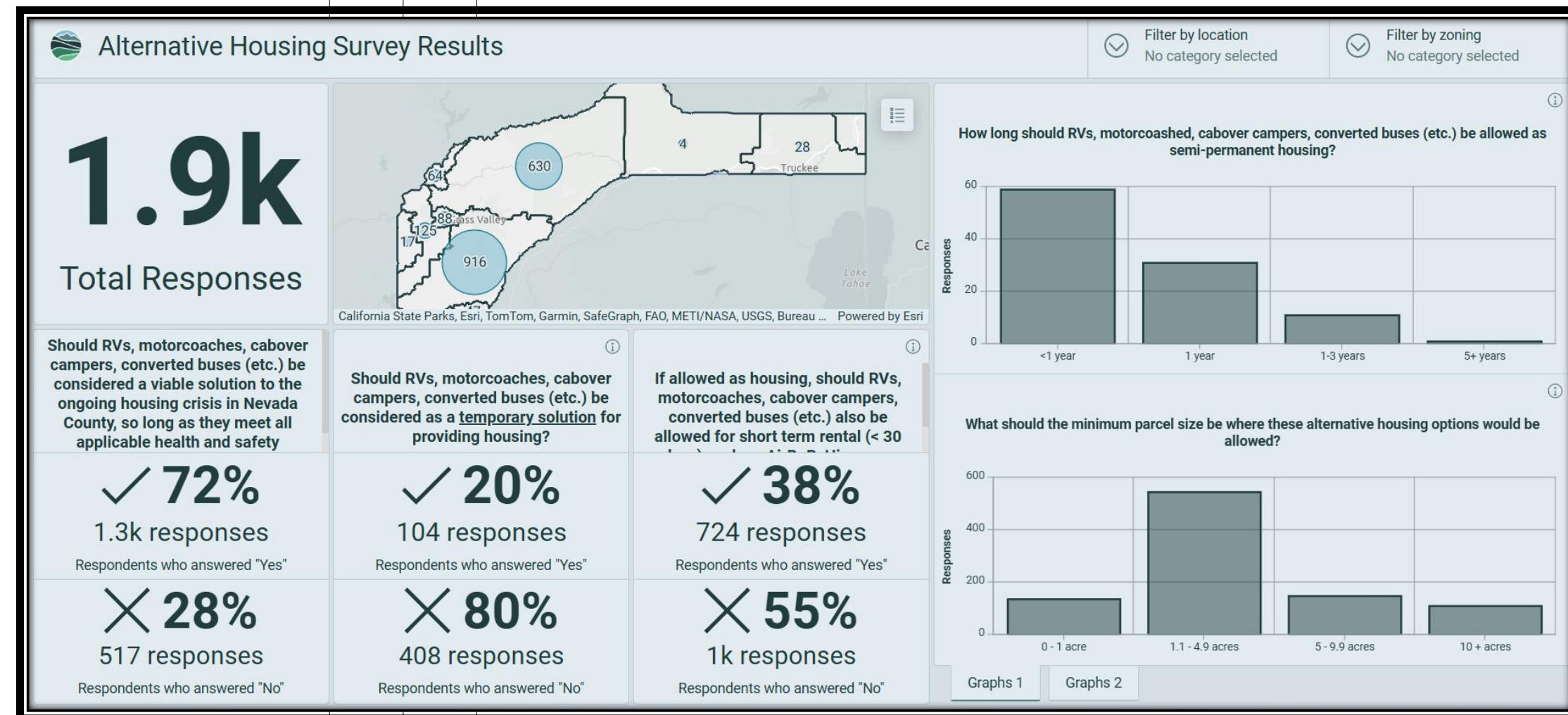
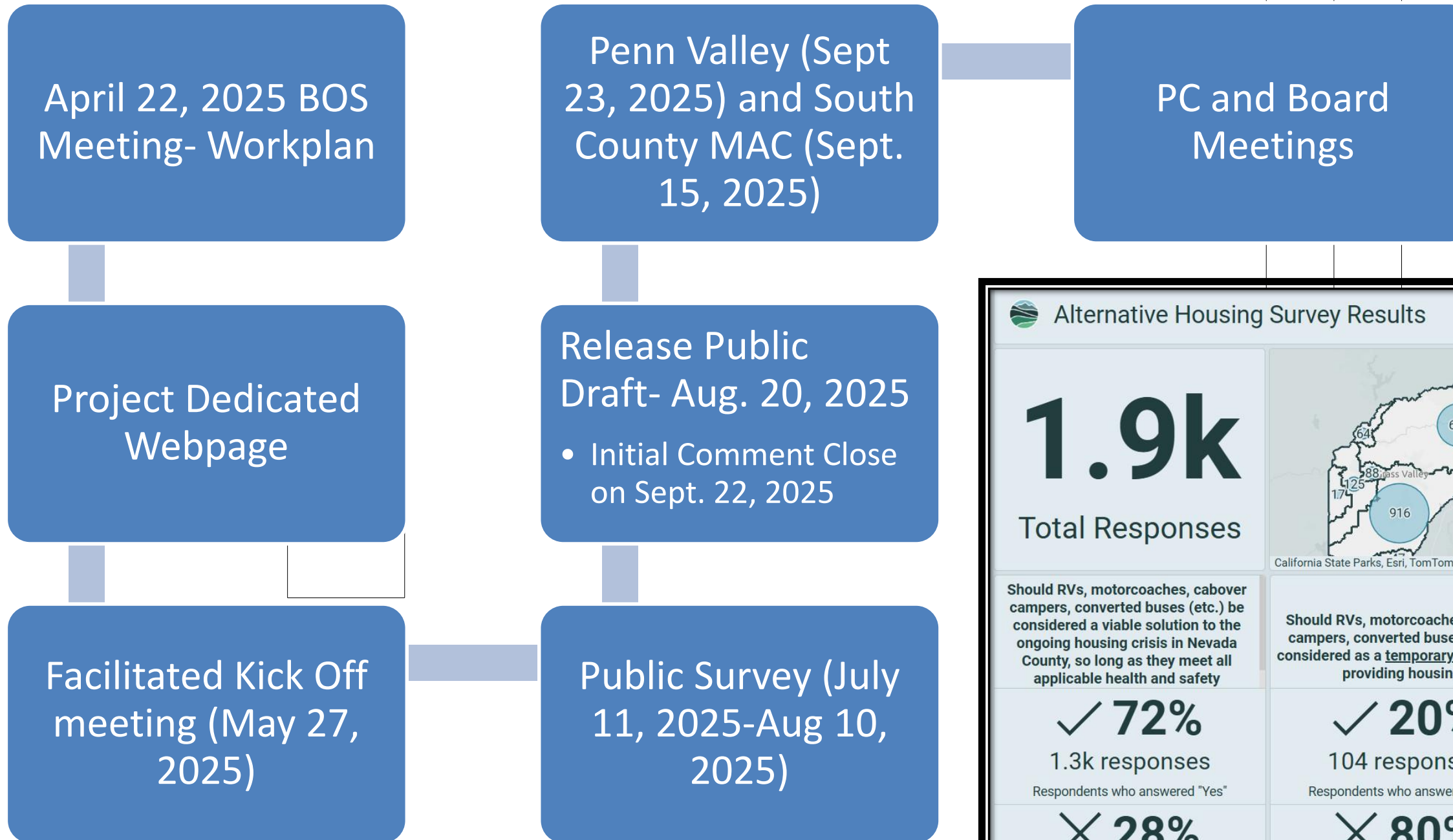
Parcels by Zoning District in Each Supervisor District - 3 Acre Cap					
District	AG	FR	RA	TPZ	Sum
1	2049	164	1700	16	3929
2	1604		1318		2922
3	24		501	1	526
4	4942	730	513	22	6207
5	583	2052	4	388	3027
Sum	9202	2946	4036	427	16611

Nevada County

This form provides permit cost estimates for tiny home on wheels projects. It does not include fees to outside agencies such as PG&E, Nevada Irrigation District (NID) or for permits with Nevada County Public Works or Environmental Health for well/septic installation. You will need to reach out to those agencies separately for cost values. THIS IS A PERMIT ESTIMATE ONLY. Additional fees, including grading permit fees, may apply.

	Primary Western Nevada County Max. 400 sf	ADU Western Nevada County Max. 400 sf	Primary Eastern Nevada County Max. 400 sf	ADU Eastern Nevada County Max. 400 sf
Fees Paid at Permit Application Submittal				
PLAN CHECK AND PROCESSING FEES				
Building Permit Processing	\$177.92	\$177.92	\$177.92	\$177.92
Building Residential Plan Review	\$284.40	\$284.40	\$284.40	\$284.40
Planning: Site Plan Review	\$322.40	\$322.40	\$322.40	\$322.40
Environmental Health: Plan Review	\$229.56	\$229.56	\$229.56	\$229.56
Fees Paid at Permit Issuance				
BUILDING INSPECTION FEES				
Building: Residential Inspection	\$832.60	\$832.60	\$832.60	\$832.60
IMPACT FEES				
Public Works: Traffic Impact	\$1,400.00	\$0	\$1440.00	\$0
School fees. Western: \$5.17/sf. Eastern: \$3.69/sf. Estimate based on 400sf	\$2,068.00	\$0	\$1,476.00	\$0
Fire District (fees vary per district, average \$1 sf)	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00
Western County Park and Recreation fees * LWW:\$386. LOP: \$949. Other : \$1,982	*Various	\$0	-	-
Eastern County Park and Recreation fees: \$2.21 psf. Estimate based on 400sf	-	-	\$884.00	\$0
STATE FEES & ARCHIVING FEES				
State and document archive fees	\$126.90	\$126.90	\$126.90	\$126.90
Estimated Building Permit Fee Total	\$5,841.78*	\$2,373.78	\$6,173.78	\$2,373.78

Project Milestones



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