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A dark blue silhouette of the Sacramento skyline, including various buildings and the two towers of the Golden Gate Bridge, set against a light blue background.

Workshop: Preliminary Framework for Regulating Cottages on Wheels (LR26-001)

Planning and Design Commission

Policy Context

Program H23. Movable Tiny Homes as ADUs



The City shall consider amending the Planning and Development Code to allow movable tiny homes to be considered an ADU.

- ❖ **Implements which Policy(ies):** H-3.1
- ❖ **Timeframe:** 2024
- ❖ **Responsible Department or Agency:** Community Development
- ❖ **Objective:** Streamline and reduce costs for ADUs throughout the City, but with a specific focus on areas of high opportunity to affirmatively further fair housing.



What are Cottages on Wheels?

Category	Description
Housing Type	Small dwelling units designed to be placed on a wheeled chassis.
Dwelling Features	Includes complete facilities for living, sleeping, eating, and sanitation, allowing the unit to function independently as a dwelling.
Unit Size	Between 150 and 400-square-feet.
Mobility	Towable, but not designed or intended for self propelled movement.
Construction Standards	Constructed in compliance with American National Standards Institute (ANSI) I 19.5 and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) I 192 , with certification by a qualified third-party inspector.
Registration	Registered with the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

"Tiny house on wheels" on the left, and "RV" on the right.



Typical Tiny House



Typical Recreational Vehicle

Why a Local Framework Is Needed

- Regulatory Context
 - Not expressly defined as a housing type in state law.
 - State ADU laws apply to permanent buildings (COWs are not considered permanent)
 - Local zoning and permitting needed for clarity and safety standards

Other Jurisdiction Examples

STANDARD	PLACER COUNTY	NEVADA COUNTY	WEST SACRAMENTO	SAN JOSE	City of San Diego
Naming Convention	Moveable Tiny Home	Moveable Tiny Home	Tiny Homes on Wheels	Tiny Homes on Wheels	Moveable Tiny House
Land Use	Primary, Accessory Dwelling Unit, or Community (4-12/du)	Primary or Accessory Dwelling Unit	Primary or Accessory Dwelling Unit	Accessory Dwelling Unit	Accessory Dwelling Unit
Zoning (Allowed-in)	Single-unit, multi-unit (ADU), commercial, mixed-use zones (ADU)	Single-unit dwelling zoning	Single unit zoning, Sometimes requires CUP or Minor Use Permits in some zones	Allowed in Single Family Zoning	Allowed in single-unit dwelling zone
Max Size	400 sq. ft. or less	400 sq. ft.	399 sq. ft.(includes loft areas)	150 sq. ft. – 400 sq. ft.	150 sq. ft. – 430 sq. ft.
Appearance	Must resemble house, rather than an Recreational Vehicle (i.e.no slide-outs, etc.)	Must resemble house, typical housing materials such as siding or roofing	Must resemble house, pitched roofs/windows. One story structure; lofts are allowed	Must resemble house or “conventional structure”, no slide-outs, tip-outs, nor other forms of mechanically articulating room area extensions	Exterior standards: Durable cladding, double-pane windows, integrated HVAC, no slide-outs
Utilities	Hookup to water, sewer, electric (all mechanical equipment must be in structure) Building Permit shall be obtained for installation of a subpanel, electrical pedestal, and approved exterior outlets, unless otherwise designed to be self-contained.	Shall be connected to water supply and sewage disposal facilities. Management Plan (LAMP) and On-Site Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Building Permit shall be obtained for installation of a subpanel, electrical pedestal, and approved exterior outlets, unless otherwise designed to be self-contained.	Shall be connected to the City water and sewer systems or on an approved well and/or septic system where City services are not available. Energy: shall incorporate an electrical subpanel and connected to power the power grid	Must include sewer, water, and electrical connections; natural gas is prohibited. Tiny homes require less transient, hard-wired connections (with flexibility for seismic safety), unlike RV-style hookups. Applications must detail plumbing specifics, including water riser placement, drainage distances, and site plan compliance.	Must support full independent living (sleeping, cooking, sanitation) and connect to water, sewer, and electric utilities; natural gas is prohibited. Water/sewer connections must meet California Plumbing Code, allow disconnection, and verify capacity if sharing existing systems. Electrical must comply with California Electrical Code, include a dedicated service panel, and proper disconnection means.

Draft Framework: Zoning, Design, and Utilities

Standard	Proposed
Land Use	Cottage on Wheels
Zoning (Allowed by right)	Single-Unit and Duplex Dwellings zones including R-1, R-1A, R-1B, and R-2
Minimum and Maximum Size	Minimum: 150-square-feet Maximum: 400-square-feet
Registration	HCD and DMV
Construction Certification	American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 119.5 and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1192
Appearance	Must resemble a house. Must include commonly used materials found in neighborhood. Specific details related to doors, windows, and roof pitches will apply and all wheels and mechanical equipment must be screened.
Setbacks	Based on Zoning
Utilities	Shall be connected to City water and sewer systems or on an approved well and/or septic system where City services are not available. Shall be connected to electric utilities All utility systems must be designed for safe disconnections
Fire	Certified and Inspected for ANSI 119.5 and NFPA 1192 compliance (3 rd Party). No fire sprinklers required.
Foundation/Parking	Shall be placed on decorative pavers, asphaltic concrete or Portland cement, concrete paving, or alternative treatments providing comparable strength and performance for vehicles intended to use the facility

Draft Ordinance Framework

- Locational Requirements
 - Proposal: Allow COWs in the Single-Unit and Duplex Dwellings zones including R-1, R-1A, R-1B, and R-2.
- Number
 - Proposal: Allow a maximum of one COW on all lots developed with one or more dwellings.
- Permitted through Site Plan and Design Review Process
 - Approved at staff level if applications conform with applicable standards
 - Deviations are reviewed by the Design Director at a noticed public hearing.
 - **Step 1:** Planning review and approval through Site Plan and Design Review
 - **Step 2:** Building Review for Building Permits (Utilities) and inspections

Next Steps

- **Spring 2026:** Housing Policy Working Group + Other Stakeholder Outreach
- **Summer 2026:** Ordinance Adoption (PDC, L&L, Council)

Feedback on Draft Ordinance Framework

Staff is seeking input from the Commission on draft ordinance details such as:

- Permitted zones
- # of permitted COWs per lot
- Review level and type

Thanks!

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City of
SACRAMENTO

