



**City of St. Helena
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, November 4, 2025 @ 6:00 PM
Vintage Hall Board Room - Second Floor
465 Main Street, St. Helena**

PLEASE NOTE: Any person who wishes to speak regarding an item on the agenda or make a comment under the "Public Forum" portion of the agenda may do so, but please observe the time limit of four minutes.

The Planning Commission meeting will be live-streamed on Comcast Channel 28 and on the City's website. Public comment for Planning Commission meetings will be accepted via email to publiccomment@cityofstheleena.gov. All public comments must be emailed at least three hours prior to the meeting. Emailed public comments will not be read out loud but will be publicly available and attached to the on-line agenda.

Simultaneous Spanish interpretation services during meetings can be scheduled upon request. To ensure interpreters are available, requests must be made at least 72 hours in advance by calling the Office of the City Clerk at (707) 968-2640 or emailing cityclerk@cityofstheleena.gov.

The schedule of upcoming meetings and published meeting agendas can be found on the City of St. Helena website at <https://stheleena.civicweb.net/portal/>.

Servicios de interpretación en español durante la reunión pueden ser solicitados por el público. Para asegurar que los intérpretes estén disponibles, los servicios tienen que ser solicitados al menos 72 horas antes de la reunión llamando a la oficina de la Secretaria de la Ciudad al (707) 968-2640 o por correo electrónico a cityclerk@cityofstheleena.gov.

El horario de las reuniones publicadas y próximas puede ser localizado en el sitio de web de la Ciudad en <https://stheleena.civicweb.net/portal/>.

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1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL
Chair: Chris Warner
Vice-Chair: Sue Furdek
Commissioners: Autumn Anderson, Hector Lopez and Michelle Covell

City staff present at the meeting will be noted in the minutes.

3. PUBLIC FORUM:
This is an opportunity for the public to address the Commission on items of interest to the public that are NOT listed on the agenda. Because of restrictions imposed by the Brown Act, the Commission may not engage in discussion nor take action on matters not described on the agenda. **Please observe the time limit of four minutes.**

- 3.1. Public Comment
[Public Forum Parke \(1\)](#)

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4. CONSENT ITEMS

Members of the Commission or the public may ask that any items be considered individually for purposes of considering alternative action, for extended discussion, or for public comment. Unless that is done, one motion may be used to adopt all recommended actions. (Roll Call Vote)

4.1. Approval of Minutes: October 21, 2025

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[Planning Commission Minutes 10.21.25](#)

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

5.1. Recommendation of the Planning Commission that the City Council adopt an ordinance amending Sections 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales) and 17.16.030 (B) (Residential Development Standards - Residential Zoning Districts Table, Endnote 5a), of the St. Helena Municipal Code to correct clerical errors and inaccurate references.

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CEQA Determination: Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the project will not have a significant impact on the environment and is exempt from CEQA.

Prepared By: Jackie Oneal, Senior Planner

Recommendation:

Recommend that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending that the City Council:

1. Find that the proposed changes to Chapter 17.22 and 17.16 of the St. Helena Municipal Code exempt from CEQA Guideline 15061 (b)(3); and
2. Adopt an ordinance (ZOA 25-005) amending Sections 17.22.050 and 17.16.030 (B) Endnote 5a of the St. Helena Municipal Code.

[Staff Report](#)

[Public Comment Monnette\(1\)](#)

[Public Comment Parke \(2\)](#)

[Public Comment Covell \(3\)](#)

[Public Comment Redmon \(4\)](#)

6. SCHEDULED MATTERS

7. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

This is an opportunity for staff to report on or update the Commission on any relevant matters.

8. AGENDA FORCAST

This is an opportunity for the Commission as a whole to request items be placed on future agendas for discussion. These items should be consistent with, and work to implement adopted Council Goals.

A list of current planning projects is available on our city website in the link below:

<https://cityofsthenelena.org/230/Planning-Projects>

9. ADJOURNMENT

The next Regular Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Vintage Hall Board Room located at 465 Main

Street.

This agenda was posted at City Hall, 1088 College Avenue, and at Vintage Hall, 465 Main Street, St. Helena, California on October 27, 2025.



Maya DeRosa, Community Development Director

Appeal. A person who is dissatisfied with a decision of the Planning Commission may appeal that decision to the City Council pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.12.020, Appeal procedure. Actions of the Planning Commission will be listed on the City Council agenda the following Tuesday to give the City Council opportunity to review the Planning Commission's decision. Absent of an appeal by the City Council or by a citizen, the appeal period will terminate two weeks after the Planning Commission hearing.

Special Assistance for the Disabled. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please call the City Clerk's Office (707) 967-2792. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28 CFR35.102-35.104 ADA Title II). However, City staff will attempt to assist at any time with accessibility. The City Clerk has equipment to assist those with a hearing impairment.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY PROCEDURES

Pursuant to the Government Code Section 54954.3, the public may address the Commission on each agenda item during the Commission's consideration of that item. Each speaker has the option to state his or her name for the record before testifying. Depending on the number of speakers or the interest of the item, the Planning Commission Chairman may also restrict, at his/her discretion, the speaker's time to three minutes. The Chairman may also restrict public comments if they become irrelevant to the agenda item or repetitious of prior comments. All persons interested may appear and be heard or submit written statements prior to the Planning Commission meeting. Please note that if you challenge the City's decision on any of these matters in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the meeting or in written correspondence delivered to the City at, or prior to, the meeting.

CHALLENGING DECISIONS OF CITY ENTITIES

The time limit within which to commence any lawsuit or legal challenge to any quasi-adjudicative decision made by the City of St. Helena is governed by Section 1094.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure, unless a shorter limitation period is specified by any other provision, including without limitation Government Code section 65009 applicable to many land use and zoning decisions, Government Code section 66499.37 applicable to the Subdivision Map Act, and Public Resources Code section 21167 applicable to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Under Section 1094.6, any

lawsuit or legal challenge to any quasi-adjudicative decision made by the City must be filed no later than the 90th day following the date on which such decision becomes final. Any lawsuit or legal challenge, which is not filed within that 90-day period, will be barred. Government Code section 65009 and 66499.37, and Public Resources Code section 21167, impose shorter limitations periods and requirements, including timely service in addition to filing.

If a person wishes to challenge the above actions in court, they may be limited to raising only those issues they or someone else raised at the meeting described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of St. Helena, at or prior to the meeting. In addition, judicial challenge may be limited or barred where the interested party has not sought and exhausted all available administrative remedies.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL RECEIVED AFTER THE POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Any supplemental writings or documents distributed to a majority of the Planning Commission regarding any item on this Agenda, after the posting of the Agenda, will be available for public review in the Planning Department's Office located at 1088 College Avenue, St. Helena, California, during normal business hours. In addition, such writings or documents will be made available on the City's web site at <http://cityofsthenana.gov> and will be available for public review at the respective meeting.

The **ABCs** of **ADUs**

A guide to
Accessory Dwelling Units
and how they expand housing options
for people of all ages



BASEMENT ADU



DETACHED ADU



ATTACHED ADU



SECOND-STORY ADU



GARAGE-CONVERSION ADU

AARP[®]
Real Possibilities



Websites: AARP.org and AARP.org/Livable
Email: Livable@AARP.org
Facebook: /AARPLivableCommunities
Twitter: @AARPLivable
Free Newsletter: AARP.org/Livable-Subscribe

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 or older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. The AARP Livable Communities initiative works nationwide to support the efforts by neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties, rural areas and entire states to be livable for people of all ages.



Website: OrangeSplot.net
Email: eli@OrangeSplot.net

Orange Splot LLC is a development, general contracting and consulting company with a mission to pioneer new models of community-oriented, affordable green housing developments. Orange Splot projects have been featured in the *New York Times*, *Sunset Magazine* and on NBC's *Today* show. (The detached ADUs on page 3 and the back cover are by Orange Splot.) Company founder Eli Spevak has managed the financing and construction of more than 250 units of affordable housing, was awarded a Loeb Fellowship by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, cofounded the website AccessoryDwellings.org and serves as a vice chair of Portland, Oregon's Planning and Sustainability Commission.

The ABCs of ADUs

A guide to Accessory Dwelling Units and how they expand housing options for people of all ages

WRITTEN AND EDITED BY: Eli Spevak, Orange Splot LLC | Melissa Stanton, AARP Livable Communities

ART DIRECTOR: Mimi Park, Design Park, Inc.

COPY EDITOR: Don Armstrong | **ART PRODUCTION:** Steve Walkowiak

PROJECT ADVISERS AND REVIEWERS:

Danielle Arigoni, Director, AARP Livable Communities

Karen Chapple, Professor, University of California, Berkeley

Lina Menard, Founder, Niche Consulting

Heather Peters, Senior Housing and Community Development Policy Analyst, San Mateo County, California

Kol Peterson, Cofounder, AccessoryDwellings.org | Caravan: The Tiny House Hotel | ADU Tour: Portland, Oregon

Denise Pinkston, Partner, TMG Partners

Harriet Tregoning, past Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Housing and Urban Development

Jake Wegmann, Assistant Professor, University of Texas at Austin

COVER IMAGE CREDITS (clockwise from top left)

Front: Communitecture: Architecture, Planning, Design | Alex Hayden | AccessoryDwellings.org | AccessoryDwellings.org | Melissa Stanton, AARP

Back: Eli Spevak, Orange Splot LLC | Kol Peterson, BuildingAnADU.com | Schuyler Smith, Polyphon Architecture & Design, LLC

A NOTE TO READERS: Many of the photographs and project examples in this publication are from Portland, Oregon, one of the first municipalities in the nation to encourage the creation of accessory dwelling units.

Visit AARP.org/ADU to download or order this free guide and find more resources about accessory dwelling units.

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Welcome! Come On In

AARP surveys consistently show that the vast majority of people age 50 or over want to remain in their homes and communities as they age rather than relocate

We know from surveys by AARP and others that a majority of Americans prefer to live in walkable neighborhoods that offer a mix of housing and transportation options and are close to jobs, schools, shopping, entertainment and parks.

These preferences — coupled with the rapid aging of the United States' population overall and decrease in households with children — will continue to boost the demand for smaller homes in more compact neighborhoods.

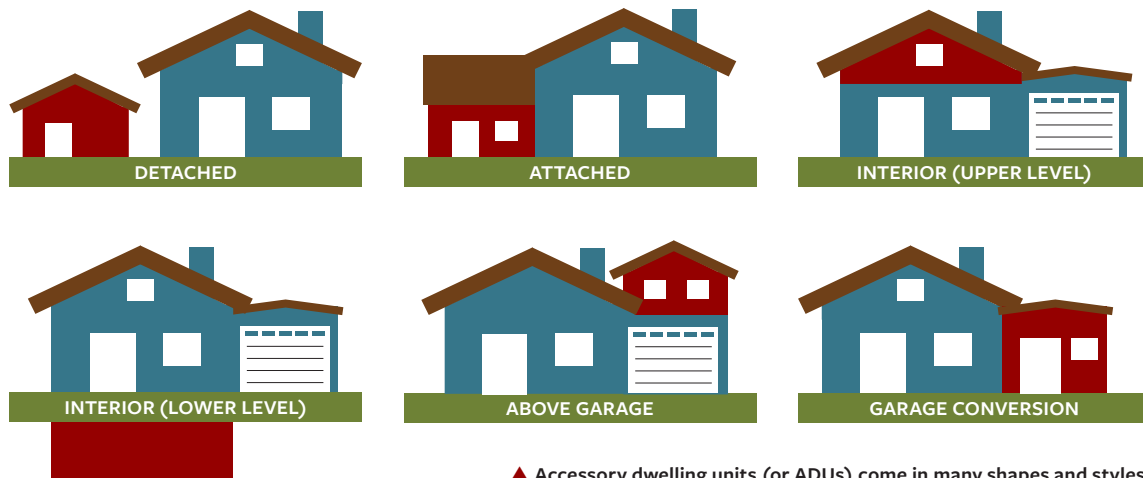
As small houses or apartments that exist on the same property lot as a single-family residence, accessory dwelling units — or ADUs — play a major role in serving a national housing need.

This traditional home type is reemerging as an affordable and flexible housing option that meets the needs of older adults and young families alike.

In fact, in the 2018 AARP Home and Community Preferences Survey, people age 50-plus who would consider creating an ADU said they'd do so in order to:

- provide a home for a loved one in need of care (84%)
- provide housing for relatives or friends (83%)
- feel safer by having someone living nearby (64%)
- have a space for guests (69%)
- increase the value of their home (67%)
- create a place for a caregiver to stay (60%)
- earn extra income from renting to a tenant (53%)

Since ADUs make use of the existing infrastructure and housing stock, they're also environmentally friendly and respectful of a neighborhood's pace and style. An increasing number of towns, cities, counties and even states have been adapting their zoning or housing laws to make it easier for homeowners to create ADUs.



The ABCs of ADUs is a primer for elected officials, policymakers, local leaders, homeowners, consumers and others to learn what accessory dwelling units are and how and why they are built. The guide also suggests best practices for how towns, cities, counties and states can include ADUs in their mix of housing options.

ADUs Come in Many Shapes and Styles

ADUs are a family-friendly, community-creating type of housing the nation needs more of

Although many people have never heard the term, accessory dwelling units have been around for centuries (see page 6) and are identified by many different names. To be clear about what's being discussed:

- An ADU is a small residence that shares a single-family lot with a larger, primary dwelling
- As an independent living space, an ADU is self-contained, with its own kitchen or kitchenette, bathroom and sleeping area
- An ADU can be located within, attached to or detached from the main residence
- An ADU can be converted from an existing structure (such as a garage) or built anew
- ADUs can be found in cities, in suburbs and in rural areas, yet are often invisible from view because they're positioned behind or are indistinct from the main house
- Because ADUs are built on single-family lots as a secondary dwelling, they typically cannot be partitioned off to be sold separately
- An ADU can provide rental income to homeowners and an affordable way for renters to live in single-family neighborhoods
- An ADU can enable family members to live on the same property while having their own living spaces — or provide housing for a hired caregiver
- Unlike tiny houses (see page 17), ADUs are compact but not teeny, so they're a more practical option for individuals, couples and families seeking small, affordable housing
- For homeowners looking to downsize, an ADU can be a more appealing option than moving into an apartment or, if older, an age-restricted community
- ADUs can help older residents remain in their community and “age in place”



CREATIVE COMMONS

▲ Accessory dwelling units show up in neighborhoods throughout the country — and even in pop culture. One example: In the sitcom *Happy Days*, Fonzie (right) rented an above-garage ADU from the Cunningham family in 1950s-era Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

ADUs are also known as ...

Although most local governments, zoning codes and planners in the United States use the term *accessory dwelling unit* or *ADU*, these small homes and apartments are known by dozens of other names. The different terms conjure up different images. (Who wouldn't rather live in a “carriage house” than in an accessory or “ancillary” unit?) Even if you've never heard of accessory dwelling units or ADUs, you have likely heard of — and perhaps know the locations of — some of the home types noted at right.



▲ Renting out this 350-square-foot garage-conversion ADU in Portland, Oregon, helps the property owner, who lives in the lot's primary residence, pay her home mortgage.

- accessory apartment
- alley flat
- back house
- backyard bungalow
- basement apartment
- carriage house
- coach house
- garage apartment
- granny flat
- guest house or cottage
- in-law suite
- laneway house
- mother-daughter house
- multigenerational house
- ohana unit
- secondary dwelling unit
- sidekick

PHOTO AND LIST FROM ACCESSORYDWELLINGS.ORG

Since ADUs can be created in many different shapes and styles, they're able to fit discreetly into all sorts of communities, including suburban subdivisions, row-house streets (either with or without back-alleys), walkable town or urban neighborhoods — and, of course, large lots and rural regions.



◀ A **DETACHED ADU** (aka DADU) is a stand-alone home on the same lot as a larger, primary dwelling. Examples include backyard bungalows and converted outbuildings.

Location: Portland, Oregon | Photo by David Todd



▶ An **ATTACHED ADU** connects to an existing house, typically through the construction of an addition along the home's side or rear. Such units can have a separate or shared entrance.

Location: Davidsonville, Maryland | Photo by Melissa Stanton, AARP



◀ A **GARAGE ADU** makes use of an attached or detached garage by converting the space into a residence. Other options involve adding a second-story ADU above a garage or building a new structure for both people and cars.

Location: Portland, Oregon | Photo by Radcliffe Dacanay

An **INTERNAL ADU** is created when a portion of an existing home — an entire floor, part of a floor, or an attic or basement — is partitioned off and renovated to become a separate residence.

▶ Access to an **UPPER-LEVEL ADU** can be provided through a stairway inside the main home or directly from an exterior staircase. This 500-square-foot ADU sits atop a 1,900-square-foot primary dwelling.

Location: Portland, Oregon | Photo by Eli Spevak, Orange Splot LLC



▲ A **LOWER-LEVEL ADU** is typically created through the conversion of a home's existing basement (provided that height and safety conditions can be met), during construction of the house, or (see page 7) as part of a foundation replacement and house lift.

Location: Portland, Oregon | Photo by Derin Williams

ADUs Are Good for People and Places

Communities that understand the benefits of ADUs allow homeowners to create them

ADUs are an affordable housing option

- ADUs can generate rental income to help homeowners cover mortgage payments or simply make ends meet. The income provided by an ADU tenant can be especially important for older people on fixed incomes.
- Since the land on which an ADU is built already belongs to the homeowner, the expense to build a secondary residence is for the new structure only. The lot is, in a sense, free.
- ADUs are typically owned and managed by homeowners who live on the premises. Such landlords are less likely to raise the rent once a valued tenant has moved in. Many ADUs are created for family members to reside in for free or at a discounted rate.
- Although market rate rents for ADUs tend to be slightly more than for similarly sized apartments, they often represent the *only* affordable rental choices in single-family neighborhoods, which typically contain no studio or one-bedroom housing options at all.
- Some municipalities are boosting ADUs as part of affordable housing and anti-displacement strategies. Santa Cruz, California (see opposite), is among the cities with programs to help lower-income households build ADUs or reside in them at reliably affordable rents.

ADUs are able to house people of all ages

- An individual's housing needs change over time, and an ADU's use can be adapted for different household types, income levels, employment situations and stages of life.
- ADUs offer young people entry-level housing choices.
- ADUs enable families to expand beyond their primary home.
- ADUs provide empty nesters and others with the option of moving into a smaller space while renting out their larger house or letting an adult child and his or her family reside in it.

ADUs are just the right size

- Generally measuring between 600 and 1,000 square feet, ADUs work well for the one- and two-bedroom homes needed by today's smaller, childless households, which now account for nearly two-thirds of all households in the United States.

ADUs are good for the environment

- ADUs require fewer resources to build and maintain than full-sized homes.
- ADUs use significantly less energy for heating and cooling. (Of all the ADU types, internal ones tend to have the lowest building and operating costs.)

ADUs are community-compatible

- ADUs offer a way to include smaller, relatively affordable homes in established neighborhoods with minimal visual impact and without adding to an area's sprawl.
- ADUs provide a more dispersed and incremental way of adding homes to a neighborhood than other options, such as multistory apartment buildings. As a result, it's often easier to get community support for ADUs than for other housing types.

Big houses are being built, small houses are needed

Do we really need more than three times as much living space per person as we did in 1950? Can we afford to buy or rent, heat, cool and care for such large homes?

YEAR	1950	2017
Average square footage of new single-family homes	983	2,571
Number of people per household	3.8	2.5
Square feet of living space per person	292	1,012

Fact: ADUs house more people per square foot of living area than single-family homes do.

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS (AVERAGE HOME SIZES), U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZES)

HOME VISIT #1

Attached ADU Addition

Santa Cruz, California

Size: 500 square feet



AARP



▲ The area with the darker roof shingles is the ADU that was added onto the home of Carrie and Sterling Whitley.

◀ The Whitleys' ADU (that's Carrie showing off the front yard's new paths and plantings) has its own entrance on the side of the home and is being rented to the couple's daughter so she can help her elderly parents when needed.

When Carrie and Sterling Whitley bought their house in 1971, they paid less than \$15,000. Nearly 50 years later, similar homes on their street have sold for more than \$1 million.

THE PROBLEM: The Whitleys, who are in their 80s, own the house outright and don't want to move. But the financial and physical demands involved in maintaining the house are a challenge.

A SOLUTION: To help low-income homeowners age 62 or older live independently and keep their homes, the Monterey Bay affiliate of Habitat for Humanity and the City of Santa Cruz launched My House My Home: A Partnership for Aging-in-Place. The pilot program builds accessory dwelling units so older homeowners can downsize into a new, aging-friendlier home and earn rental income from their original house. Or such homeowners can remain in their house and rent out the new, smaller residence. Participating homeowners are required to charge an affordable rental rate.

REALITY CHECK: When the Whitleys' project broke ground in April 2017, they were the first homeowners to receive an ADU through the program, which worked with them to design the ADU as an addition to their existing home. Since the dwelling was built with accessibility features, Carrie and Sterling know they can downsize into it if they ever need to. Until then, their daughter, Brenda, resides in the addition.

REAL LIFE: "I'm right next door to my parents in case they need me or need any help," Brenda says.

Design: Historic Sheds | Builder: Historic Sheds | Cost to build: \$158,000 in 2017 (not including volunteer labor) | Photos by Michael Daniel | Article adapted from Where We Live: Communities for All Ages (AARP 2018)



ADU ADVICE: With an attached ADU, privacy between the two residences can be achieved by locating the ADU bedroom(s) and bathroom(s) as far as possible from the main house. Providing the ADU with its own yard or outdoor space is helpful too.

ADUs Are an American Tradition

While today's interest in ADUs may be new, the housing type is centuries old

Early settlers often built a small home to live in while constructing their larger, primary house nearby.

When farming was a source of survival for most of the nation's households, families routinely constructed additional homes on their land when needed.

People with wealth and acreage regularly populated their lands with secondary mansions and ancillary buildings independent of the main estate house.

In fact, until the 20th century, people with land built as many homes as they wished. There were few or no zoning rules, municipal services or infrastructure (utilities, roads, schools, trash collection, first-responders) to consider.

A historic precedent for the modern day accessory dwelling unit is the "carriage house," or "coach house." Originally built for horse-drawn carriages, the structures associated with grander homes were frequently large enough to double as living quarters for workers and stable hands.

Decades later, in response to housing shortages and economic needs, many surviving carriage houses were

converted into rental homes. By becoming landlords, the owners gained income from their otherwise unused outbuildings.

Automobile garages have a similar history. Some were originally built with a housing unit upstairs. Over time, many garages were converted (often illegally or under zoning codes no longer applicable today) into small homes when the spaces became more valuable for housing people than vehicles.

With the rise of suburban single-family home developments following World War II, ADUs practically ceased to be built legally in the United States. Then as now, residential zoning codes typically allowed only one home per lot, regardless of the acreage and with no exceptions. Attached and detached garages occupied yard space that might otherwise have been available for ADUs.

Some cities, including Chicago, grandfathered in pre-existing ADUs — but only if the residences remained consistently occupied. In Houston's historic and trendy Heights neighborhood, old and new garage apartments are common and desired.

But elsewhere, even in rural areas with ample land, property owners are often prohibited from creating secondary dwellings. Many communities today don't allow new ADUs, even if they did in the past — and even if ADUs currently exist there. (Countless units in single-family homes or yards are technically illegal or are allowed simply because they were created when such residences had been legal.)

ADUs began making a comeback in the 1980s as cities explored ways to support smaller and more affordable housing options within single-dwelling neighborhoods. In 2000, in response to a growing demand for ADU-supportive guidelines, AARP and the American Planning Association partnered to release an influential model state act and local code for ADUs.

More recently, there's been renewed interest at the state and local levels (see page 8) in legalizing and encouraging the creation of ADUs, driven by the increasingly high cost of housing and, in some places, the belief that homeowners with suitable space shouldn't be so restricted in the use of their property.

▼ This carriage house containing a one-bedroom, one-bath ADU above a two-car garage sits behind a six-level, Gilded Age, Hoboken, New Jersey, townhome that was built in 1883. The dual residence property was on the market in 2018 for \$5 million.



PHOTO BY MIMI PARK, DESIGN PARK, INC.

HOME VISIT #2

Garage Apartment ADU

Denver, Colorado

Size: 360 square feet



▲ The apartment above the garage can be reached from inside the garage or from an exterior side entrance accessed from the yard it shares with the primary residence.

“I see our ADU as something very similar to a student loan,” says Mara Owen. “It’s something you invest in the future with. It was cheaper than buying a house for Mom, and it lets her have independence. It’s great knowing we can check in on her whenever.”

AH-HA MOMENT: Owen, her partner, Andrew, and their three dogs were sharing a one-bedroom, one-bath house with her mother, Diane. When Owen learned that ADUs were allowed in the city, she decided the best way to get more space for her small home’s many residents would be to remove their “leaky and defunct” garage and build a new two-car garage with an apartment above it.

WISE ADVICE: “Get a really great builder and architect,” says Owen. “Interviewing architects was similar to a first date. It’s not just who you feel connected with. That’s important, but get to the values. It’s a niche market, so see if you can find someone who has built ADUs before, because ADUs are a little different.”

FUTURE PLANS: The stairs to Diane’s apartment are wide enough for a stair lift, if it’s ever needed. The roof was built at the correct slope for the eventual installation of solar panels.

Design: Hive Architecture | Builder: Hive Architecture | Cost to build: \$167,000 in 2016 | Photo by Mara Owen | Article adapted from “ADU Case Studies” by Lina Menard on AccessoryDwellings.org. Visit the website to read about and see photographs of more ADU projects.

HOME VISIT #3

Basement ADU

Portland, Oregon

Size: 796 square feet

The transformation of this colorful Victorian was both a preservation and expansion project.

TEACHING MOMENT: “Here’s a very welcome breath of fresh air, especially in the face of so much gentrification that is going on in Portland!” declared Mark Lakeman, principal of Communitecture, an architectural, planning and design firm, about the pictured remodel. Writing on his company’s website, he says the project provides a lesson in how to “adapt and reuse our precious historic houses so they can accommodate more people while also providing more income to support the existing home.”

HOW’D THEY DO IT? To add a basement rental unit, engineers lifted the house. The resulting ADU is roughly four feet underground and four feet above.



▲ By lifting the house and digging beneath it, designers, engineers and builders turned a two-story, single-family home into a three-story, multifamily residence.

THE ACHIEVEMENT: Adds Lakeman: “Unlike the seemingly pervasive method of simply tearing down existing buildings so that new, giant ones can be built, this approach achieves upgrades in energy efficient living places and adds density while retaining the continuity of our beloved historical urban environment.”

Design: Communitecture | Home Lift: Emmert International | Builder: Tom Champion | Cost to build: \$125,000 in 2015 | Photos by Communitecture (before) and Chris Nascimento (after)

The Time Is Now

Rules for ADUs continue to evolve and frequently differ from one town to the next

Some communities allow almost any home to be set up with an ADU — so long as size limits, property line setbacks and placement caveats in relation to the primary dwelling are met.

Other communities start with those basic standards and then layer on extra requirements (see page 14) that can make it challenging to create an ADU.

Municipalities nationwide have been relaxing their restrictions against ADUs, and some states have been encouraging their creation by requiring communities to allow them.

- In 2017, California required all of its cities and counties to allow ADUs so long as the property owner secured a building permit. In Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti has said ADUs could provide the city with a needed 10,000 housing units. He's touted ADUs as a "way for homeowners to play a big part in expanding our city's housing stock and make some extra money while they're at it."
- That same year, a New Hampshire law established that local zoning codes had to allow ADUs nearly everywhere single-family housing was permitted. The change stemmed in large part from the frustration of builders who couldn't construct the type of amenities, such as backyard cottages and garage apartments, that their clients desired.
- Oregon requires cities and counties of certain sizes within urban growth boundaries to allow ADUs in all single-family neighborhoods.
- As of 2019, major cities that allow ADUs include Anchorage, Alaska; Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Honolulu, Hawaii; Houston, Texas; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; Seattle, Washington; and Washington, D.C. Communities in Massachusetts, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana and Oregon have sought advice from AARP and Orange Spot about revising their zoning codes to allow ADUs.

► The unique floor plan of this single-family Maryland farmhouse allows for a first floor residence (accessed through the door on the right) and an upper-level ADU that can be reached through the entrance at left.

To Encourage ADUs

LOCAL OFFICIALS can ...

- allow all ADU types (detached, attached, interior)
- simplify the building permit process for ADUs
- waive or reduce permit and impact fees
- let garages be converted into ADUs without requiring replacement off-street parking
- allow a second ADU if one of the homes on the property meets accessibility standards

COMMUNITY PLANNERS can ...

- adopt simple, flexible but nondiscretionary ADU rules about setbacks, square footage and design compatibility with the primary dwelling

LENDERS can ...

- work with homeowners to finance the construction of ADUs by using renovation loans

ADVOCATES can ...

- organize tours of completed ADUs in order to inform and inspire the community
- educate homeowners, real estate agents, architects and builders about local zoning regulations and the permit process

REAL ESTATE AGENTS can ...

- educate themselves and their clients about rules for the construction of ADUs

LOCAL MEDIA can ...

- report on how and why homeowners build ADUs



PHOTO BY MELISSA STANTON, AARP

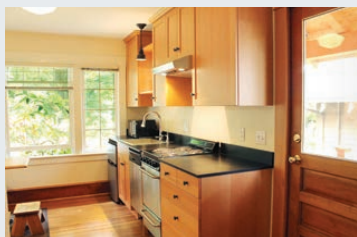
HOME VISIT #4**Internal ADU (Main Level)****Portland, Oregon****Size:** 220 square feet

Even small homes can have enough space for an ADU. An underused main floor bedroom in this 1.5-story, 1,500-square-foot bungalow was transformed into a studio apartment.

AH-HA MOMENT: According to Joan Grimm, who owns the home with Rita Haberman: “What we were looking for in terms of a community and aging in place was right under our noses. Remove a fence and create a shared open space. Build a wall and create a second dwelling unit. It doesn’t have to be complicated.”

REAL LIFE: “Creatively carving out an ADU from the main floor of our house saved on design and construction costs,” Grimm adds. “It provides an opportunity for rental income, with no significant compromise to the livability of our home.”

*Design: Rita Haberman | Builder: RS Wallace Construction | Cost to build: \$55,000 in 2015 (with some work done by the homeowners)
Photos courtesy Billy Ulmer | Article adapted from “ADU Case Studies” by Lina Menard on AccessoryDwellings.org*



▲ The steps and side entrance (top) lead to the studio apartment ADU, which was crafted out of an existing space. The covered porch to the right leads to the primary residence. The ADU contains a kitchen, small dining and living area, sleeping area, bathroom and laundry area.

HOME VISIT #5**Internal ADU (Lower Level)****Portland, Oregon****Size:** 795 square feet

“We were looking for a way to live in our house for the rest of our lives and to generate at least some income in the process,” Robert Mercer and Jim Heuer wrote for the program guide of the annual Portland ADU Tour when their home was part of the lineup. “An ADU offers the possibility of caregiver lodging in the future or even a place for us to live while we rent out the main house if we get to the point where we can’t handle the stairs any longer.”

THE SOUND OF SILENCE: Internal ADUs often require that soundproofing insulation be installed between the primary dwelling and the accessory unit that’s below, above or beside it. In Portland, the building code for duplex residences requires a sound insulation rating of at least STCC45. To property owners thinking about a similar ADU setup, the duo advise: “Think about how you live in your home and

▼ The door to the right of the garage leads to a ground-floor ADU with windows along the back and side walls. The upper-level windows seen below are part of the main residence.



how having downstairs neighbors will change what you can and can’t do with your space and what investment you are prepared to make in sound insulation.”

AN ADDED BONUS: “We are pleased that we have been able to provide more housing density on our property and still be in keeping with the historic character of our home.”

Design: DMS Architects | Builder: Weitzer Company | Cost to build: \$261,000 in 2016 | Photo by Melissa Stanton, AARP | Article adapted from the 2017 ADU Tour project profiles on AccessoryDwellings.org

Bringing Back ADUs

The reasons for creating or living in an ADU are as varied as the potential uses

ADUs are flexible. Over time, a single ADU might be used in many ways as an owner's needs and life circumstances change. Following are just a few reasons why ADUs are created and by whom:

EMPTY NESTERS can build an ADU and move into it, then rent out the main house for supplemental income or make it available to their adult children.

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN can use an ADU as housing for a nanny or au pair or even a grandparent or two, who can then help raise their grandkids and be assisted themselves as they age.

INDIVIDUALS IN NEED OF CARE can reside in an ADU to be near family members, or they can use the ADU to house a live-in aide. (In fact, ADUs can be an affordable and more comforting alternative to an assisted-living facility or nursing home.)

HOME BUYERS can look forward to the rental income from an ADU to help pay their mortgage or finance home improvements, especially in expensive housing markets.

HOME-BASED WORKERS can use an ADU as their office or workshop.

HOMEOWNERS can use an ADU for guests or as housing for friends or loved ones who:

- aren't yet financially independent, such as new high school or college graduates
- need temporary housing due to an emergency or while renovating their own home
- have disabilities but can live independently if family reside nearby



▲ The zoning code in Evanston, Illinois, permits accessory dwelling units, creating an opportunity for the owners of this 1911 home with an outbuilding in the backyard.

Planning and Paying for ADUs

Most new homes are built by developers, entire subdivisions at a time. Apartments are also built by pros.

But ADUs are different.

Although ADUs are occasionally designed into new residential developments, the vast majority are created by individual homeowners after they move in. In other words, ADUs are usually created by enthusiastic and motivated *amateurs*.

An ADU may present the ultimate chance for a do-it-yourselfer to build his or her small dream home. More often, homeowners bring in a combination of architects, designers and construction contractors to do the work, much as they would for a home addition or major kitchen remodeling. The local municipality's planning department can provide guidance on the rules for ADUs and information about what permits, utility connections and fees are involved.

ADUs aren't cheap, and they are often the most significant home improvement project a homeowner will undertake.

Although internal ADUs can sometimes be built for about \$50,000, new detached ADUs often exceed \$150,000. Most ADUs are financed through some combination of savings, second mortgages, home equity lines of credit and/or funds from family members (sometimes a relative who ends up living in it).

In some areas, the cost of building an ADU can be recouped after a few years of renting it. If that's the plan, it's worth estimating the expenses versus the potential income before undertaking an ADU project.

A few cities, nonprofits and start-ups are experimenting with creative financing options that could put ADUs within reach for more homeowners and their families, as well as prospective renters.

PHOTO BY EU SPEAK, ORANGE SPLOT LLC



HOME VISIT #6

Detached ADU (One-Story)

Decatur, Georgia

Size: 800 square feet

When Walt Drake decided to downsize, his son Scott purchased his dad's house for himself and his family and built a detached ADU (or DADU) for Walt.

"From not finding what we wanted for Dad, we decided to create it," says Scott. "Neighborhoods built in the 1920s have carriage houses. Building an ADU was a modern day version of something people have been doing on their property in this area for a hundred years."

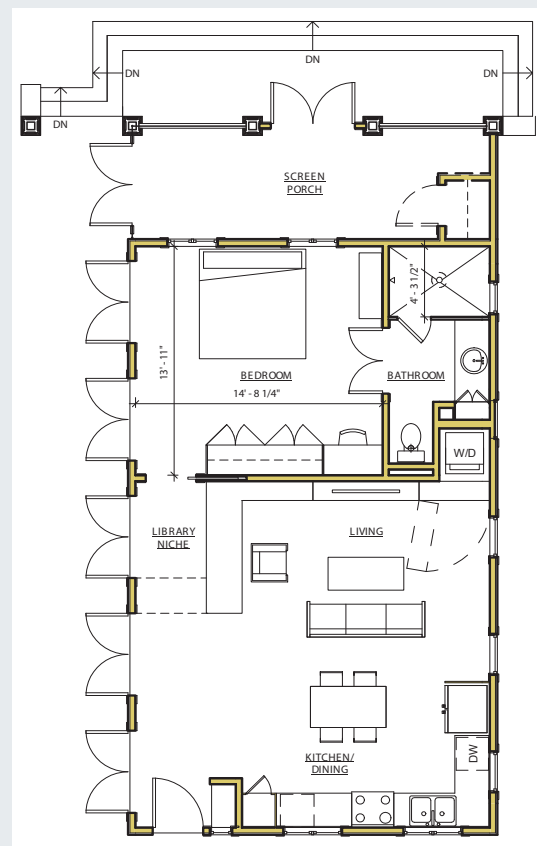
NEAR AND FAR: "We wanted the houses to be separate and to feel like we're each on our own property, but we're there for each other," says Scott.

AGING-FRIENDLY: Building the ADU meant Walt didn't have to sell his home and leave his neighborhood. "He was able to keep his own stuff and turn over what he didn't need to us," says Scott. "It kept my dad in place, which I think was important."

FUTURE PLANS: Scott says the ADU is "serving its intended purpose" but that someday down the road it could be used as a long- or short-term rental. "The ADU could turn into lots of different things over the course of its lifetime."

Design: Adam Wall, Kronberg Wall | Builder: Rob Morrell | Cost to build: \$350,000 in 2014 | Photo by Fredrik Brauer | Floor plan by Kronberg Wall Architects | Article adapted from "ADU Case Studies" by Lina Menard on AccessoryDwellings.org

▲ Walt Drake's Southern-style, one-bedroom ADU has an outdoor, wraparound porch that can be accessed without using steps. The design is in keeping with other buildings in the neighborhood.



ADUs Are Age-Friendly Housing

New-construction ADUs can be created with “universal design” features

An “age-friendly” home has a zero-step entrance and includes doorways, hallways and bathrooms that are accessible for people with mobility differences. Garage conversions (such as the one pictured on page 2) are among the easiest and least expensive ADU solutions for aging in place since they’re preexisting structures and generally have no-step entries. To learn more about making a home aging-friendly, download or order the AARP HomeFit Guide at AARP.org/HomeFit.

HOME VISIT #7

Detached ADU (Two-Story)

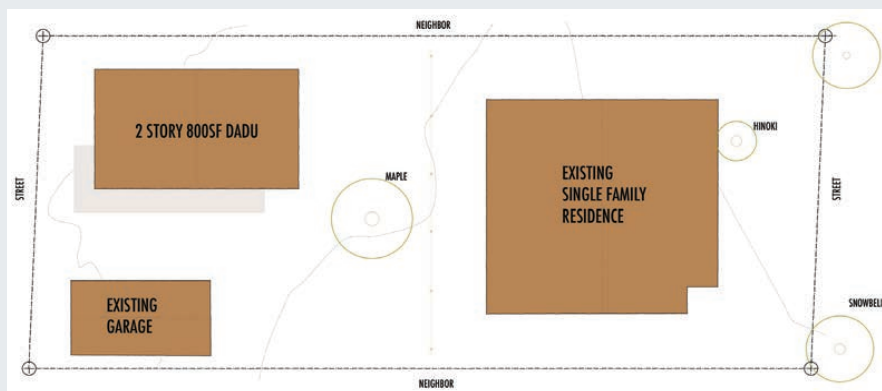
Seattle, Washington

Size: 800 square feet

Evelyn Brom’s plan was to build a backyard cottage and rent it out. She would keep living in her two-bedroom home.

AH-HA MOMENT: As the design developed, Brom realized that *she* wanted to live in the stunning wood-and-glass ADU. It was a good decision. A week before moving in, Brom was laid off from her job.

REAL LIFE: The \$3,000 a month Brom receives in rent for the main house (which is occupied by a three-generation family) provides a needed income. “Being laid off has made this arrangement a lifesaver,” Brom says. If the stairs in the cottage ever become too hard to navigate, she can move back into her original one-story house and rent out the cottage instead. “Now I have options,” she says.



▲ There’s a powder room, open kitchen and living room on the first floor, with a bedroom and bathroom upstairs.

◀ Although Brom’s property is only 0.13 acres, it’s large enough to accommodate two homes, a patio, a lawn and a garage. A slatted wood fence with a gate divides the space between the two houses and provides privacy.

Design: Chrystine Kim, NEST Architecture & Design | Builder: Ian Jones, Treebird Construction | Photo by Alex Hayden | Cost to build: \$250,000 in 2014
Article adapted from Where We Live: Communities for All Ages (AARP 2018)

HOME VISIT #8

Detached Bedroom

St. Petersburg, Florida

Size: 240 square feet

Bertha and her son John talked about someday buying a house with a mother-in-law suite. “Then one day someone came along and wanted my house, so I up and sold it,” she explains. “But that left me homeless. I asked John if I could build a small house in his backyard and he agreed.”

CREATIVE THINKING: A detached bedroom is a permanent, accessory structure that, unlike ADUs, lacks a kitchen. But that’s what makes these cabin-like homes more affordable to build than many ADUs and even tiny houses.

WHAT’S INSIDE: Bertha’s home contains a sleeping and living area and a full bathroom. “I paid for the little house and it’s on my son’s property. So I figured, if I’m cooking I can do it at my son’s house,” she says. (Her laundry is also done at his house.)



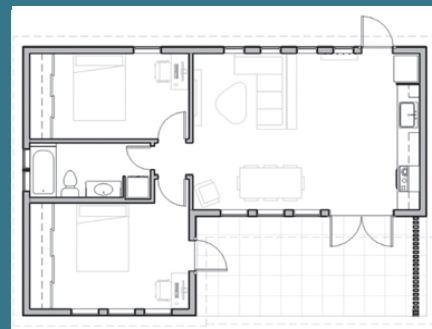
▲ A detached bedroom, which contains a bathroom but no kitchen, can provide housing for a loved one or serve as a home office or guest cottage.

REAL LIFE: “Having access to my son’s house makes it livable. Otherwise, I personally would not be happy. It’s very comforting to know that John is close by. Hopefully this will be my home forever.”

Design: Historic Sheds | Builder: Historic Sheds | Cost to Build: \$50,000 in 2017 | Photo by Historic Sheds | Article adapted from “ADU Case Studies” by Lina Menard on AccessoryDwellings.org

A Sustainable and Sunny ADU

Tired of living in a house with so many walled off and dark spaces that the sun couldn’t shine in, the home’s owners built and moved into the bright, airy, modern and very accessible ADU they created in their yard. (The original, larger home has become a rental.) The ADU is located within a conservation district and was constructed using sustainable materials and environmentally friendly techniques. One such feature is the deck trellis, which allows light in while diffusing the heat of the afternoon sun.



▲ Although this ADU has only 721 square feet of living space, there is room enough for two bedrooms.

Design: Propel Studio | Builder: JLTB Construction | Photo by Josh Partee | Cost to build: \$185,000 in 2017 | Article adapted from “ADU Case Studies” by Lina Menard on AccessoryDwellings.org

Practical Solutions for ADUs

Local laws can both allow and appropriately control the creation of accessory dwellings

There are more than 19,000 cities, 16,000 towns and 3,000 counties in the United States. Regulations about ADUs are typically written or adopted at the local government level.

Where it's legal to build ADUs, homeowners still need to follow rules about where it can be done, how tall they can be, how many square feet they can contain, what they can look like and how they can be used. These rules can be found in the local zoning code.

Over the past few decades it has become clear that there's a balance to strike between the strictness of ADU regulations and how often ADUs get built.

For instance, after Portland, Oregon, relaxed its ADU rules in 2010 and waived impact fees (a savings of up to \$12,000), the number of ADUs built there increased from about 30 per year between 2000 and 2009 to practically one ADU a day in 2015.

Changes in California's ADU laws allowed Los Angeles to achieve an even more dramatic increase, going from 80 permit applications in 2016 to nearly 2,000 in 2017. Allowing both an ADU and a "Junior ADU," or JADU — an interior ADU of 500 square feet or fewer — on properties in Sonoma County were among the urgent

policies adopted in the wake of Northern California's many devastating fires.

Meanwhile, in many jurisdictions, well-intentioned but burdensome rules can stymie the creation of ADUs. ADU-related zoning codes should be restrictive enough to prevent undesirable development but flexible enough that they actually get built.

When a community is worried about a potentially undesirable outcome, it can — and many do — craft regulations to prevent particular building types, locations or uses. A city concerned about the environmental impact of new structures might prohibit placing detached ADUs in precarious locations, such as on steeply sloping lots. Communities wary of ADUs becoming, for instance, off-campus student housing could establish occupancy rules.

Every community has its own priorities and concerns, and there's a wide enough range of regulatory controls that communities can write appropriate ADU rules.

This inherent flexibility in the form and function of ADUs allows them to pass political muster and get adopted in a wide range of places. (See page 16 for more about uses and rules.)

Rules that discourage ADUs

- ADU-specific regulations that don't also apply to primary dwellings (e.g., owner-occupancy requirements)
- complex design compatibility criteria and approval steps
- off-street parking requirements beyond those required for the primary dwelling
- restrictions that limit ADUs to certain geographic areas, particular zoning categories or to large lots
- caps on square footage relative to the primary house that make it easy to add an ADU to a large home but hard or impossible to add one to a small home

TRADING SPACES: An ADU is always the smaller of two dwellings on a property, but it's possible for an existing home to become the ADU when a larger house is built and becomes the primary dwelling.

Are ADUs allowed in your community?

Find out by calling the office in charge of land use and permits or stopping by in person. You can also search for and read the zoning code through the local government's website.

- If ADUs are allowed, ask what conditions, permit needs and impact fees apply.
- If ADUs are not allowed in your community and you want them to be, ask an elected official or the local department of zoning and planning for information about how the codes can be updated. Then get organized and start advocating!

Creating (or Understanding) an ADU Zoning Code

The ADU section of a community's zoning code needn't be overly complicated. It just needs to establish clear, objective and fair rules for the following:

1. A Definition: A good zoning code clearly defines its terminology. Here, for example, is a useful outline for what, in the real world, is a very fluid term: "An ADU is a smaller, secondary home on the same lot as a primary dwelling. ADUs are independently habitable and provide the basic requirements of shelter, heat, cooking and sanitation."

2. The Purpose: This is where the code describes key reasons a community allows ADUs. They should:

- increase the number of housing units while respecting the style and scale of single-dwelling development
- bolster the efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure
- provide housing that's affordable and respond to the needs of smaller, changing households
- serve as accessible housing for older adults and people with disabilities

3. Eligibility: Who can build an ADU and on what type of property? A statement in this part of the code clarifies that an ADU can be placed only on a "residentially zoned, single-family lot." (Some communities provide lot size standards, but many don't.)

4. Creation: This is where the code sets out how an ADU can be built. For instance: "An ADU may be created through new construction, the conversion of an existing structure, as an addition to an existing structure or as a conversion of a qualifying existing house during the construction of a new primary dwelling on the site."

5. Quantity: Most municipalities that permit ADUs allow one per lot. Vancouver, British Columbia; Sonoma County, California; and Tigard, Oregon, are among the few that allow two per lot (typically one internal and one external). Some communities also allow duplexes or townhomes to have ADUs, either in the backyard or on the ground floor.

6. Occupancy and Use: A code should state that the use-and-safety standards for ADUs match those that apply to the primary dwelling on the same property. (See page 17 for more about ADU uses.)

7. Design Standards:

- **Size and height:** A zoning code might specify exactly how large and tall an ADU is allowed to be. For instance, "an ADU may not exceed 1,000 square feet

or the size of the primary dwelling, whichever is smaller." Codes often limit detached ADUs to 1.5 or 2 stories in height. (An example of that language: "The maximum height allowed for a detached ADU is the lesser of 25 feet at the peak of the roof or the height of the primary dwelling.")

- **Parking:** Most zoning codes address the amount and placement of parking. Some don't require additional parking for ADUs, some do, and others find a middle ground — e.g., allowing tandem parking in the driveway and/or on-street parking. (See page 16 for more about parking.)
- **Appearance:** Standards can specify how an ADU's roof shape, siding type and other features need to match the primary dwelling or neighborhood norms. Some codes exempt one-story and internal ADUs from such requirements. (See page 16 for more about making sure that ADUs fit into existing neighborhoods.)
- **Entrances and stairs:** Communities that want ADUs to blend into the background often require that an ADU's entrance not face the street or appear on the same facade as the entrance to the primary dwelling (unless the home already had additional entrances before the ADU was created).

8. Additional Design Standards for Detached ADUs:

- **Building setbacks:** Many communities require detached ADUs to either be located behind the primary dwelling or far enough from the street to be discreet. (A code might exempt preexisting detached structures that don't meet that standard.) Although this sort of rule can work well for neighborhoods of large properties with large rear yards, communities with smaller lot sizes may need to employ a more flexible setback-and-placement standard.
- **Building coverage:** A code will likely state that the building coverage of a detached ADU may not be larger than a certain percentage of the lot that is covered by the primary dwelling.
- **Yard setbacks:** Most communities have rules about minimum distances to property lines and between buildings on the same lot. ADUs are typically required to follow the same rules.

Visit [AARP.org/ADU](https://aarp.org/ADU) to see examples of ADU zoning codes from selected cities.

ADU “Hot Topics”

As communities allow ADUs or update existing zoning codes and rules to be more ADU-friendly, they inevitably wrestle with some or all of the following issues:

Adding ADUs to neighborhoods

Recognizing that ADUs may represent a new housing type for existing neighborhoods, communities often write special rules to ensure they'll fit in well. These guidelines typically address visual compatibility with the primary dwelling, appearance from the street (if the ADU can be seen) and privacy for neighbors. Rules that help achieve these goals include:

- height and size caps mandating that ADUs be shorter and smaller than the primary dwelling
- requirements that detached ADUs be behind the main house or a minimum distance from the street
- mandates that the design and location of detached ADUs be managed the same way as other detached structures (e.g., garages) on the lot
- design standards for larger or two-story ADUs so they architecturally match the primary dwelling or reflect and complement neighborhood aesthetics
- encouragement for the creation of internal ADUs, which are often unnoticed when looking at the house

Each community can strike its own unique balance between strict rules to ensure that ADUs have a minimal impact on neighborhoods and more flexible rules that make them easier to build.

▼ A top floor ADU can be a suitable rental for a student or someone who travels a lot for work. ADU expert Kol Peterson grew up in a home with an attic ADU that was usually rented to law school students. “They had to walk up the primary house’s interior stairs in order to access the affordable attic unit,” he writes in *Backdoor Revolution: The Definitive Guide to ADU Development*. “Over the years that each of them lived there, the tenants became parts of our family.”



Providing places to park

ADU regulations often include off-street-parking minimums on top of what’s already required for the primary dwelling. Such rules can prevent homeowners from building ADUs if there’s insufficient physical space to accommodate the parking. However, additional parking often isn’t needed.

Data from Portland, Oregon, shows that there are an average of 0.93 cars for each ADU, and that about half of all such cars are parked on the street. With fewer than 2 percent of Portland homes having ADUs (the highest percentage in the country), there is about one extra car parked on the street every six city blocks. This suggests that any impacts on street parking from ADUs are likely to be quite small and dispersed, even in booming ADU cities.

More-realistic parking rules might:

- require the creation of new parking only if the ADU displaces the primary dwelling’s existing parking
- waive off-street-parking requirements at locations within walking distance of transit
- allow parking requirements for the house and ADU to be met by using some combination of off-street parking, curb parking, and tandem (one car in front of the other) parking in a driveway

Dealing with unpermitted ADUs

It’s not uncommon for homeowners to convert a portion of their residence into an ADU in violation (knowingly or not) of zoning laws or without permits.

Such illegal ADUs are common in cities with tight housing markets and a history of ADU bans. One example is New York City, which gained 114,000 apartments between 1990 and 2000 that aren’t reflected in certificates of occupancy or by safety inspections.

Some cities have found that legalizing ADUs, simplifying ADU regulations and/or waiving fees can be effective at getting the owners of illegal ADUs to “go legit” — and address safety problems in the process.

PHOTO BY KOL PETERSON, BUILDINGANADU.COM

Allowing and Restricting Uses

Communities get to decide whether to let ADUs be used just like any other housing type or to create special rules for them. Some municipalities take a simple approach, regulating ADUs just as they do other homes. So if a home-based childcare service is allowed to operate in the primary dwelling, it is also allowed in an ADU. Conversely, communities sometimes adopt ADU-specific regulations in order to avoid undesirable impacts on neighbors. Examples include:

Limiting short-term rentals

ADUs tend to work well as short-term rentals. They're small and the owner usually lives on-site, making it convenient to serve as host. However, if ADUs primarily serve as short-term rentals, such as for Airbnb and similar services, it undermines the objective of adding small homes to the local housing supply and creating housing that's affordable.

In popular markets, short-term rentals can be more profitable than long-term ones, allowing homeowners to recoup their ADU expenses more quickly. In addition, short-term rentals can provide owners with enough income that they can afford to occasionally use the ADU for friends and family.

A survey of ADU owners in three Pacific Northwest cities with mature ADU and short-term rental markets found that 60 percent of ADUs are used for long-term housing as compared with 12 percent for short-term rentals.

Respondents shared that they "greatly value the ability to use an

ADU flexibly." For instance, an ADU can be rented nightly to tourists, then someday rented to a long-term tenant, then used to house an aging parent. ADUs intended primarily for visiting family are sometimes used as short-term rentals between visits.

Cities concerned about short-term rentals often regulate them across all housing types. If there are already rules like this, special ones might not be needed for ADUs. An approach employed in Portland, Oregon, is to treat ADUs the same except that any financial incentives (such as fee waivers) to create them are available only if the property owner agrees not to use the ADU as a short-term rental for at least 10 years.

Requiring owner-occupancy

Some jurisdictions require the property owner to live on-site, either in the primary house or its ADU. This is a common way of addressing concerns that absentee landlords and their tenants will allow homes and ADUs to fall into disrepair and negatively impact the neighborhood.

Owner-occupancy rules are usually implemented through a deed restriction and/or by filing an annual statement confirming residency. Some cities go further, saying ADUs can be occupied only by family members, child- or adult-care providers, or other employees in service of the family.

Owner-occupancy requirements make the financing of ADUs more difficult, just as they would if applied to single-family homes. But as ADUs have become more common, owner-occupancy restrictions have become less so, which is good. Such requirements limit the appraised value of properties with ADUs and reduce options for lenders should they need to foreclose.

Enforcing owner-occupancy laws can be tricky, and the rules have been challenged in courts, sometimes successfully. However, according to a study by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, more than two-thirds of properties with ADUs are owner-occupied even without an owner-occupancy mandate.

While not technically ADUs, tiny houses can serve a similar purpose

► Because tiny houses — such as the 100-square-foot "Lucky Penny," pictured — are built on a trailer with wheels rather than on a fixed foundation, they are typically classified as recreational vehicles (RVs) rather than permanent residences. Although tiny homes are usually smaller than 400 square feet, many of them do contain a kitchen and bathroom.



Design and Builder: Lina Menard, Niche Consulting | Photos by Guillaume Ditilh, PhotoXplorer



ABOVE-GARAGE ADU



DETACHED-BEDROOM ADU



DETACHED ADU

- An accessory dwelling unit is a small residence that shares a single-family lot with a larger primary dwelling.
- As an independent living space, an ADU is self-contained, with its own kitchen or kitchenette, bathroom and living/sleeping area. (Garage apartments and backyard cottages are each a type of ADU.)
- ADUs can enable homeowners to provide needed housing for their parents, adult children, grandchildren or other loved ones.
- An ADU can provide older adults a way to downsize on their own property while a tenant or family member resides in the larger house.
- Since homeowners can legally rent out an ADU house or apartment, ADUs are an often-essential income source.
- ADUs help to improve housing affordability and diversify a community's housing stock without changing the physical character of a neighborhood.
- ADUs are a beneficial — and needed — housing option for people of all ages.

Learn more about ADUs and
order or download

The ABCs of ADUs

by visiting

[AARP.org/ADU](https://aarp.org/ADU)

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Real Possibilities

D20473

MINUTES
City of St. Helena
Planning Commission Meeting
Tuesday, October 21, 2025 @ 6:00 PM
Vintage Hall Board Room - Second Floor
465 Main Street, St. Helena

A complete video recording of this meeting can be found at <https://sthelena.civicweb.net/Portal/> or by calling the City Clerk at (707) 967-2792. The Planning Commission video is the official record of the Planning Commission meeting.

Present: Chair Christopher Warner, Vice-Chair Sue Furdek, Commissioner Autumn Anderson, and Commissioner Michelle Covell
Absent: Commissioner Hector Lopez
Staff Present: Maya DeRosa, Community Development Director, Andreas Booher, City Attorney, and Xinia Gamero, Planning Commission Secretary

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

3. PUBLIC FORUM:

None.

4. CONSENT ITEMS

4.1 Approval of Minutes September 2, 2025

Commissioner Autumn Anderson moved to approve the Minutes of September 2, 2025. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Michelle Covell and on roll call carried by the following vote:

AYES: Christopher Warner, Autumn Anderson, and Michelle Covell

NOES: None

ABSENT: Hector Lopez

ABSTAIN: Sue Furdek

RECUSE: None

4.2 Approval of Minutes: October 7, 2025

Vice-Chair Sue Furdek moved to approve the Minutes of October 7, 2025. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Autumn Anderson and on roll call carried by the following vote:

AYES: Autumn Anderson, Sue Furdek, and Michelle Covell

NOES: None
ABSENT: Hector Lopez
ABSTAIN: Christopher Warner
RECUSE: None

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 5.1 Consideration of ordinance amending Zoning Code to clarify the treatment of covered balconies, porches, decks and other structures for purposes of calculating floor area.

Prepared By: Maya DeRosa, Community Development Director

Community Development Director Maya DeRosa delivered a presentation and reported on the item.

Chair Warner opened public comment.

Dan Hale addressed the Planning Commission.

Vice-Chair Sue Furdek moved that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending that the City Council: 1) Find that, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3) the project is Exempt; and 2) Adopt an ordinance (ZOA 2025-002) amending Section 17.16.030, end note 5 and Section 17.35.050(A). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Autumn Anderson and on roll call carried by the following vote:

AYES: Christopher Warner, Autumn Anderson, Sue Furdek, and Michelle Covell

NOES: None

ABSENT: Hector Lopez

ABSTAIN: None

RECUSE: None

- 5.2 Consideration of an ordinance amending Sections 1.12.200, 17.05.100, 17.32.010, and 17.32.020 of the St. Helena Municipal Code to clarify provisions relating to Short Term Rentals and bring related provisions into compliance with state law.

Prepared By: Ethan Walsh, City Attorney

City Attorney Andreas Booher delivered a presentation and reported on the item.

No public comment was received.

Vice-Chair Sue Furdek moved that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending that the City Council: 1. Find that the proposed changes to Chapters 1.12, 17.05, and 17.32 of the St. Helena Municipal Code are exempt from CEQA Guideline 15061 (b)(3); and 2. adopt

an ordinance (ZOA 25-004) amending Sections 1.12.200, 17.05.100, 17.32.010, and 17.32.020 of the St. Helena Municipal Code. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Michelle Covell and on roll call carried by the following vote:

AYES: Christopher Warner, Autumn Anderson, Sue Furdek, and Michelle Covell
NOES: None
ABSENT: Hector Lopez
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSE: None

6. SCHEDULED MATTERS

7. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Community Development Director Maya DeRosa reported that two Temporary Use Permits were recently approved: one for a pop-up art gallery at 1150 Main Street, and another for a tasting room at 1508 Main Street. She also noted that the next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2025.

Chair Warner reported on Yountville's housing proposal (Yountville Commons). In addition, he encouraged the Commission to think of ideas for the upcoming study session to review which parts of the Zoning Code are working well and which may need improvement.

Commissioner Covell reported on a recent Napa County Board of Supervisors meeting item regarding the increase in hotel development fees.

Vice Chair Furdek requested that notifications and the agenda for the December 16 study session be distributed far in advance to allow the public enough time to plan ahead. She also reported attending a presentation on CEQA reforms related to affordable housing.

8. AGENDA FORCAST

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Warner adjourned the meeting at **6:59 p.m.**

The October 21, 2025 minutes were approved at the _____
Planning Commission meeting.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

Chris Warner, Chair
Planning Commission

Maya DeRosa, AICP
Community Development Director



PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Planning Commission Meeting of November 4, 2025

FILE NUMBER: ZOA 25-005

SUBJECT: Recommendation of the Planning Commission that the City Council adopt an ordinance amending Sections 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales) and 17.16.030 (B) (Residential Development Standards - Residential Zoning Districts Table, Endnote 5a), of the St. Helena Municipal Code to correct clerical errors and inaccurate references.

PREPARED BY: Jackie Oneal, Senior Planner

REVIEWED BY: Maya DeRosa, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: Maya DeRosa, Community Development Director

LOCATION OF PROPERTY: Citywide

BACKGROUND

Staff identified several minor inconsistencies and outdated provisions within the St. Helena Municipal Code that require correction to maintain consistency with current regulations and state law. The proposed ordinance would amend Sections 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales), and Table 17.16.030(B), Footnote 5a (Residential Development Standards)

Alcohol Sales Amendment

Staff initiated the amendment to Section 17.22.050 after receiving inquiries regarding potential future uses of the former A&W site, which is currently listed for sale. During review, staff determined that the existing 1,000-foot location restriction for alcohol businesses from parks, preschools, and similar uses effectively prohibits alcohol sales in most commercial areas, contrary to the intent of the code. Please also refer to Attachment 3, 1000 foot radius maps that shows the areas affected by the current 1000 foot location regulation.

This 1000 foot buffer standard was included in the 2023 comprehensive zoning code update however the zoning code consultant may not have been aware of the constraints it would create with so many schools in proximity to the downtown and commercial zones. The prior zoning code had no locational criteria, but the findings required consideration of distance of alcohol uses in relation to schools.

ADU Building Area Exemption

When the city prepared the last amendment to the ADU ordinance this year, one correction to the residential development standards was omitted and staff is processing this correction as part of this ZOA 25-005. The amendment to Table 17.16.030(B), Footnote 5a would update the ADU exemption from 400 to 800 square feet to align with current state law.

All proposed changes are administrative in nature and do not modify existing development standards or policy direction.

ANALYSIS

1. Amendment of Section 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales)

The amendment to Section 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales) would delete Subsection D "*Location*," which currently prohibit alcohol-related uses within 1,000 feet of a public park, nursery school, preschool, or day care facility; a public or private school; or an alcohol or other drug abuse recovery or treatment facility.

To ensure that distance to schools is still evaluated as part of the alcohol sales ordinance, it is recommended that the following additional finding is added to Section 17.22.050(F) Findings :

"7. Distance of the proposed establishment from public/private schools."

As stated in the Background section of this staff report, the previous version of the Zoning Code did not include any location-based separation requirements for alcoholic beverage sales. In addition, most uses involving alcoholic beverage sales are already subject to either a Conditional Use Permit or Minor Use Permit, which provide sufficient discretionary review to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses. These permit processes require the following relevant findings:

- The proposed use is appropriate for the zoning district in which it is located, compatible with uses allowed in the zoning district, and complies with all other applicable provisions of the zoning code; and
- The proposed use will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the public or to property and residents in the vicinity.

2. Amendment of Section 17.16.030(B) (Residential Development Standards - Residential Zoning Districts Table, Endnote 5a)

As mentioned in the Background Section of this report, this is a correction that was omitted from the last update to the ADU ordinance. Addressing this change will ensure that users of the Residential Development Standards Table have the correct information related to allowed 800 square foot exemption to align with current state law.

ISSUES

No issues have been identified.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending that the City Council:

1. Find that the proposed changes to Chapter 17.22 and 17.16 of the St. Helena Municipal Code exempt from CEQA Guideline 15061 (b)(3); and
2. Adopt an ordinance (ZOA 25-005) amending Sections 17.22.050 and 17.16.030 (B) Endnote 5a of the St. Helena Municipal Code.

ATTACHMENTS

[Attachment 1-Resolution for Zoning Ordinance Amendment-Alcohol Sales-FINAL](#)

[Attachment 2- St. Helena Alcohol Ordinance Revisions](#)

[Attachment 3-St Helena Schools List 1000 foot radius maps](#)

CITY OF ST. HELENA PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. PC2025-

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF
THE CITY OF ST. HELENA, CALIFORNIA,
RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT AN
ORDINANCE AMENDING 17.22.050 (ALCOHOL
BEVERAGE SALES AND SECTION 17.16.030, END NOTE
5 OF TITLE 17 (ZONING) OF THE ST. HELENA
MUNICIPAL CODE (ZOA25-005)**

Recitals

WHEREAS, the City of St. Helena, California ("City") is a municipal corporation, duly organized under the constitution and laws of the State of California; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to amend its Zoning Code (ZOA 2025-002), codified as Title 17 of the St. Helena Municipal Code ("SHMC"); and

WHEREAS, staff and the City Attorney prepared the proposed ordinance, including any additional information and documents deemed necessary for the Planning Commission to take action; and

WHEREAS, the City gave public notice of the public hearing for the proposed ordinance by publishing in the Press Democrat; and

WHEREAS, on July 22, 2025, the City Council held a policy discussion pertaining to whether porches, balconies and similar structures should be included in the determination of floor area; and

WHEREAS, on October 21, 2025, the Planning Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing and considered the staff report, recommendations by staff, and public testimony concerning the proposed ordinance.

WHEREAS, all other legal prerequisites to the adoption of this resolution have occurred.

Resolution

NOW THEREFORE, THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF ST. HELENA DOES RESOLVE, DETERMINE, FIND AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. **Recitals.** The above recitals are incorporated herein by reference.

Section 2. Compliance with CEQA. The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council find that the proposed ordinance amendment is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3).

Section 3. General Plan Consistency. Based on the entire record before the Planning Commission, and all written and oral evidence presented, the Planning Commission hereby finds that the proposed ordinance is consistent with the City's adopted General Plan. The proposed ordinance does not otherwise conflict with any of the General Plan's goals or policies.

Section 4. Zoning Ordinance Amendment 2025-002. The Planning Commission hereby recommends that the City Council adopt the attached proposed ordinance (**Exhibit A**) entitled:

An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of St. Helena amending Sections 17.22.050 (Alcohol Beverage Sales) and 17.16.030 (B), endnote 5a of the St. Helena Municipal Code (ZOA 25-005)

Section 5. The proposed ordinance is on file and has been available for public review for at least ten days prior to the date of this Resolution, in the Community Development Department, at St. Helena City Hall, 1088 College Avenue.

Section 6. Severable. If any part of this Resolution is held by a court to be invalid, that part is severable from the rest and every other part remains unaffected and in effect.

(Signatures on following page)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing recommendation to the City Council was duly and regularly approved by the Planning Commission of the City of St. Helena at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission held on November 4, 2025 by the following roll call vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

Christopher Warner
Chair, Planning Commission

Maya DeRosa, AICP
Community Development
Director

Exhibit “A”

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
ST. HELENA AMENDING SECTIONS 17.22.050 (ALCOHOL BEVERAGE SALES)
AND 17.16.030 (B), ENDNOTE 5a OF THE CITY OF ST. HELENA MUNICIPAL CODE
(ZOA 25-005)**

WHEREAS, the City of St. Helena, California (“City”) is a municipal corporation, duly organized under the constitution and laws of the State of California; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to amend Sections 17.22.050, AND 17.16.030 (B), footnote 5a, of the St. Helena Municipal Code (“SHMC”); and

WHEREAS, staff and the City Attorney prepared the proposed ordinance, including the proposed language, and any additional information and documents deemed necessary for the City Council to take action; and

WHEREAS, on November 4, 2025, the Planning Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing and considered the staff report, recommendations by staff, and public testimony concerning the proposed ordinance and municipal code amendments, and by a vote of ____-____, adopted Resolution No. PC2025-__ recommending that the City Council adopt the proposed ordinance and finding that no environmental review is required under CEQA; and

WHEREAS, the City gave public notice of the public hearing before the City Council for the proposed ordinance by publishing in the Napa Valley Register in accordance with applicable law; and

WHEREAS, on _____, 2025, the City Council held a duly-noticed public hearing and considered the staff report, recommendation by the Planning Commission, recommendation by staff, and public testimony concerning the proposed ordinance; and

WHEREAS, all other legal prerequisites to the adoption of this ordinance have occurred.

NOW, THEREFORE, The City Council of the City of St. Helena does hereby ordain as follows:

Section 1: Recitals

The Recitals set forth above are true and correct and are incorporated into this Ordinance.

Section 2: Amendment to SHMC Section 17.22.050

Section 17.22.050 of the St. Helena Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows (new language is underlined, deletions are in ~~strikeout~~):

17.22.050 Alcohol Beverage Sales.

- A. Purpose. Establishments that serve alcoholic beverages receive special attention from the City because of their potential to create problems, such as littering, loitering, public intoxication and disturbances. All establishments selling alcoholic beverages are reviewed by the City.
- B. Permits Required.
 - 1. Conditional Use Permit. A Conditional Use Permit must be obtained for all bars, brewpubs, micro-breweries, micro-distilleries, and wine-tasting rooms.
 - 2. Minor Use Permit. A Minor Use Permit must be obtained for full-service restaurants.
- C. Hours of Operation. Hours of operation shall be limited to the time period between 6:00 AM and 2:00 AM.
- ~~D. Location. The establishment shall not be located within 1,000 feet of the following:~~
 - ~~1. A public park, playground, recreational area that is immediately adjacent to a public park, or youth facility, including a nursery school, preschool, or day care facility;~~
 - ~~2. A public or private State-licensed or accredited school; or~~
 - ~~3. An alcohol or other drug abuse recovery or treatment facility.~~
- D.E. Lighting. The exterior of the establishment, including adjacent public sidewalks and parking areas, shall be illuminated during all hours of darkness during which the establishment is open such that:
 - 1. Persons standing in those areas at night are identifiable; and
 - 2. Required illumination is placed and shielded in a way that minimizes interference with the neighboring residences.
- E.F. Findings. In evaluating a use permit application for any commercial establishment where liquor is served, the Review Approval Authority shall take into consideration the following:

1. Comments from the Police Department;
2. Appropriateness of automobile and/or bicycle parking;
3. Potential for loitering;
4. Distance of the proposed establishment from other establishments;
5. Distance from areas used and zoned for residential use; and
6. Appropriateness of annual review of use permit.
7. Distance of the proposed establishment from public/private schools

Section 3: Amendment to SHMC Section 17.16.030 (B)

Section 17.16.030 (B) Endnote 5 of the St. Helena Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows (new language is underlined, deletions are in ~~strikeout~~):

Endnote 5 The following additional standards apply for existing development and new construction in the LR-1A, LR, MR, and HR zoning districts:

- a. The max. building gross floor area may be increased by up to four eight hundred (4800) sf for construction of an ADU. (See Section 17.22.030)
- b. The following buildings and areas are exempt from max. building gross floor area:
 - i. One covered parking space with a max. floor area of two hundred (200) sf;
 - ii. Nonhabitable accessory buildings with a max. floor area of one hundred twenty (120) sf;
 - iii. A nonhabitable basement or attic; and
 - iv. A balcony, porch, deck, or similar structure, whether covered or uncovered.

Section 4: Severability.

If any section, subsection, phrase, or clause of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance. The City Council would have passed this Ordinance and each and every section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase not declared invalid or

unconstitutional without regard to whether any portion of the Ordinance would be subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional.

Section 6: CEQA.

This Ordinance was assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), the State CEQA Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), and the environmental regulations of the City. The City Council hereby finds that this ordinance is exempt from review under CEQA under Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines because it can be seen with certainty that the provisions contained herein would not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

Section 7: Notice and Effective Date.

This Ordinance was duly noticed to the public. This Ordinance shall take effect and be enforced within thirty (30) days from and after the date of its adoption by the City Council at a second reading and shall be posted and published in accordance with the California Government Code.

THE FOREGOING ORDINANCE was introduced at a regular meeting of the St. Helena City Council on the ____ day of _____, 2025, and was adopted at a regular meeting of the St. Helena City Council on the ____ day of _____, 2025, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

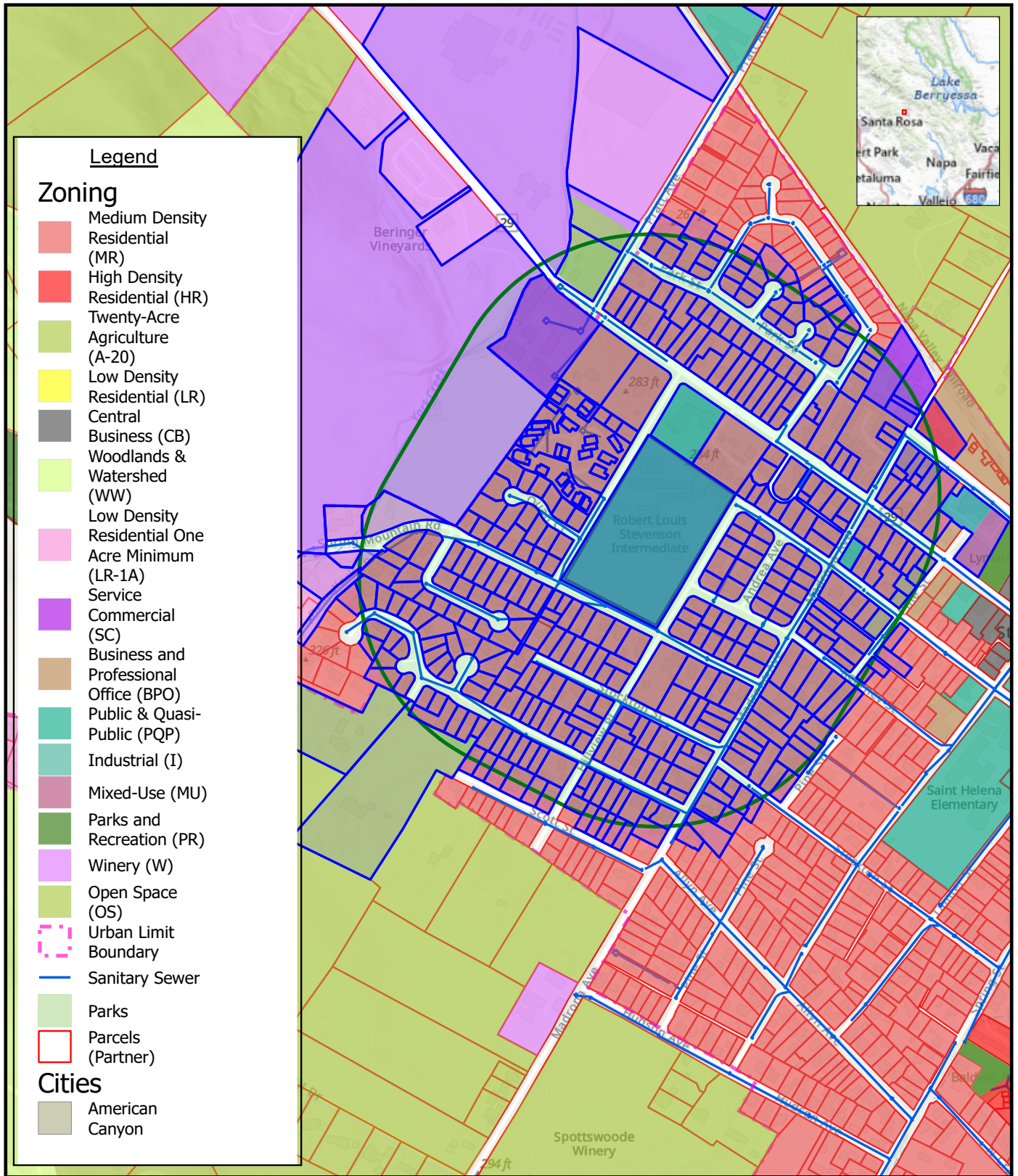
ABSTAIN:

APPROVED

ATTEST

Paul Jamison Dohring, Mayor

Andrew Bradley, City Clerk

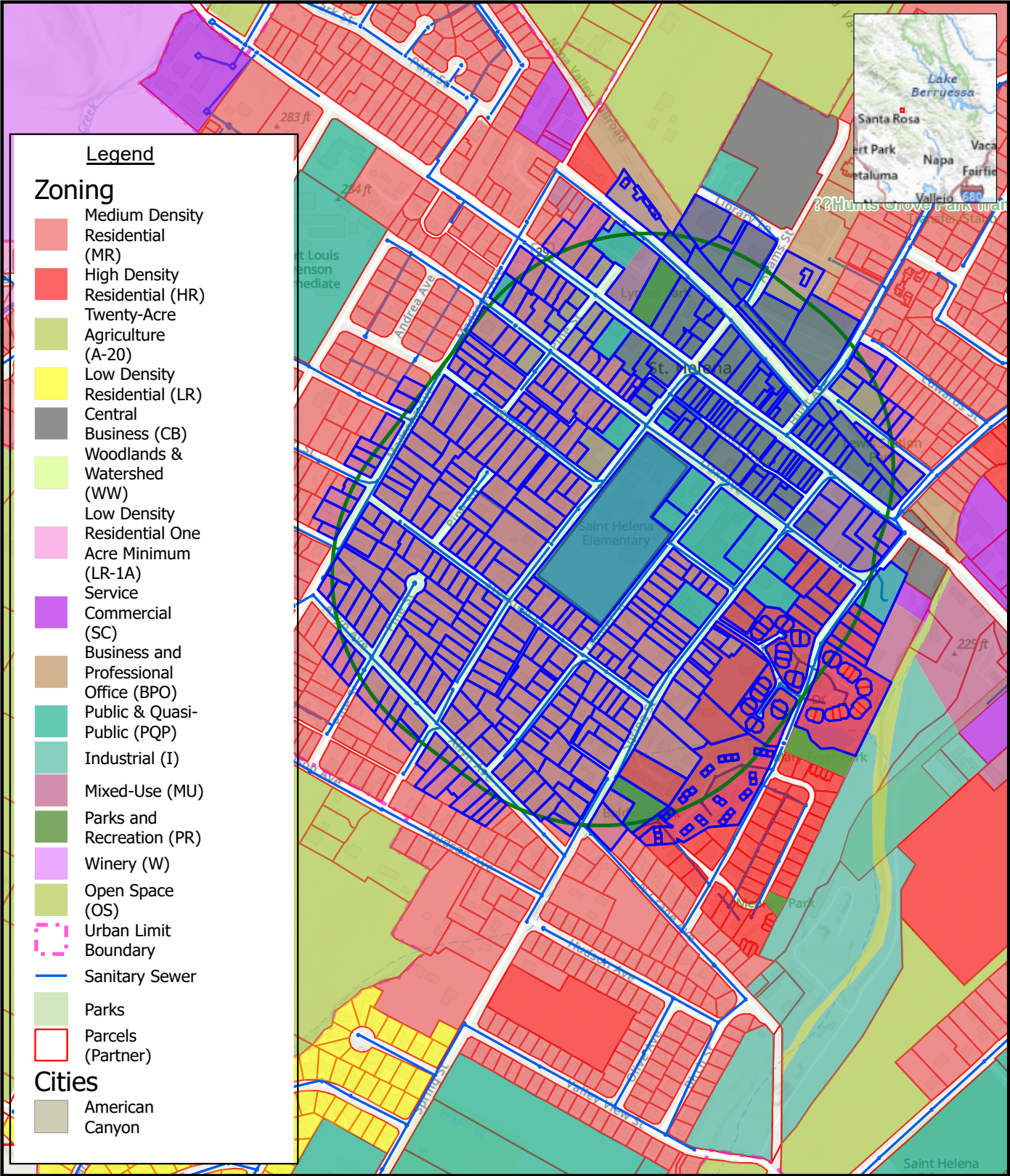


Robert Louis Stevenson (RLS)

Printed On: 10/27/2025

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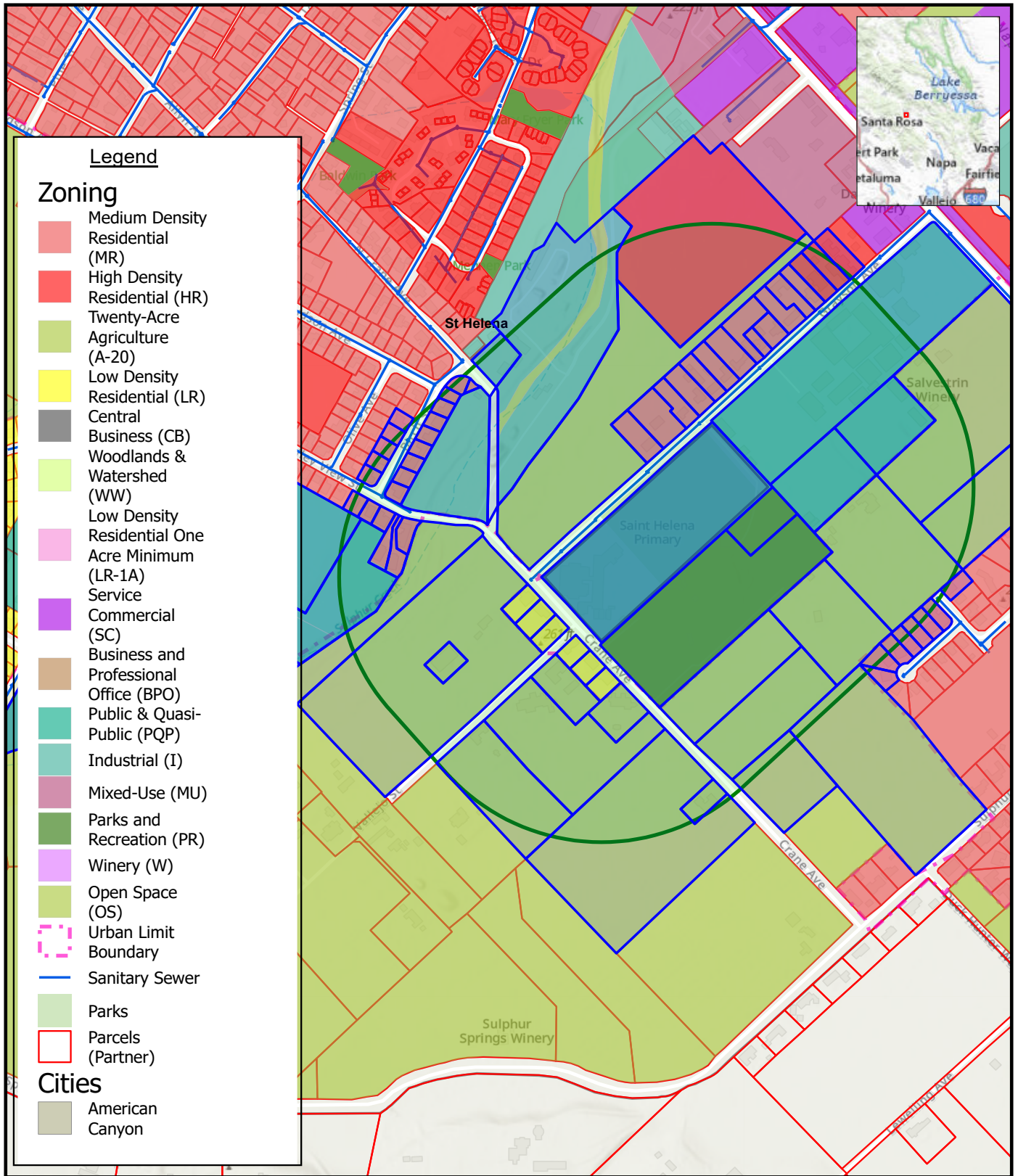


St. Helena Elementary School

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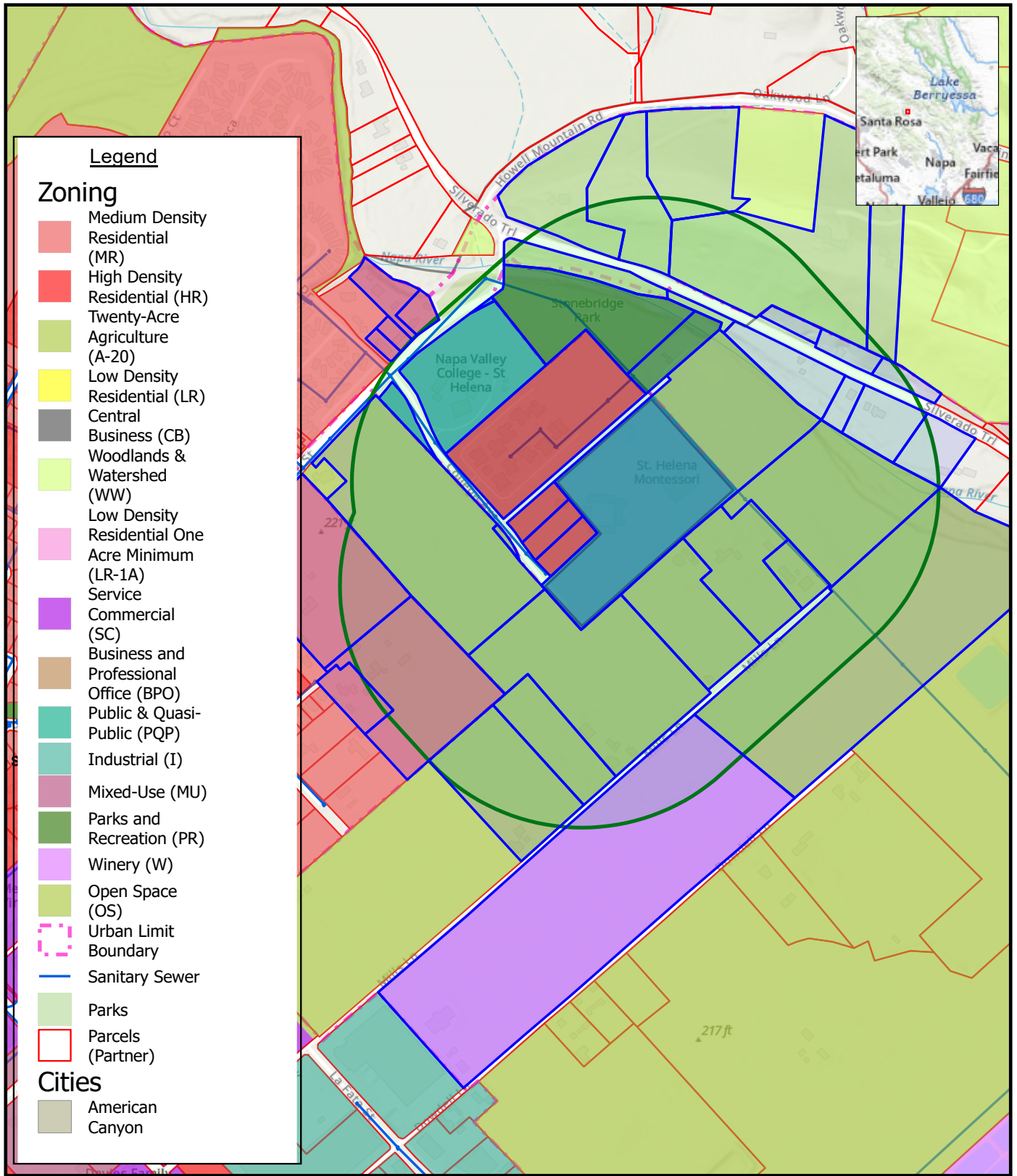


St. Helena Primary School

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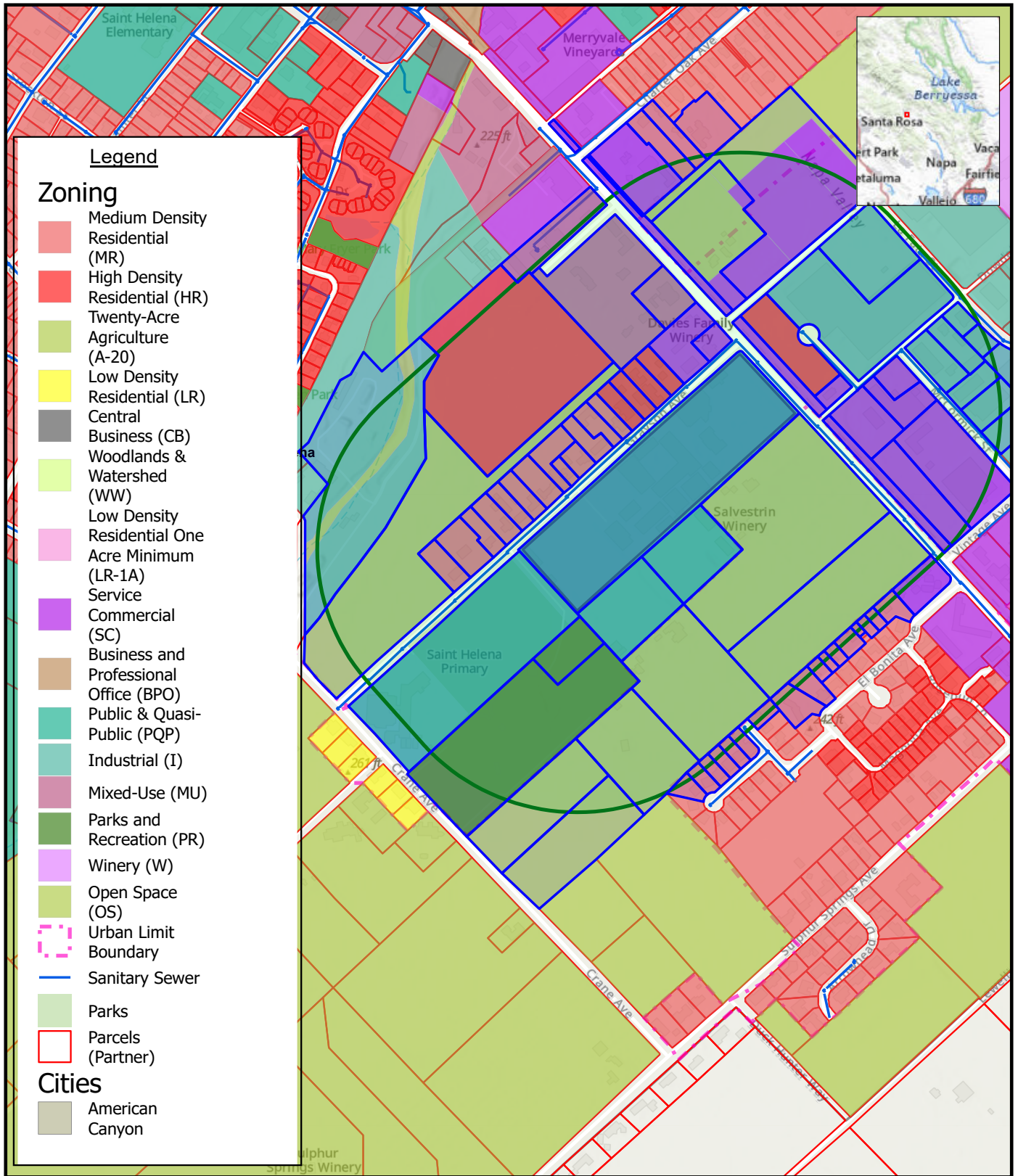


St. Helena Montessori School

Printed On: 10/27/2025

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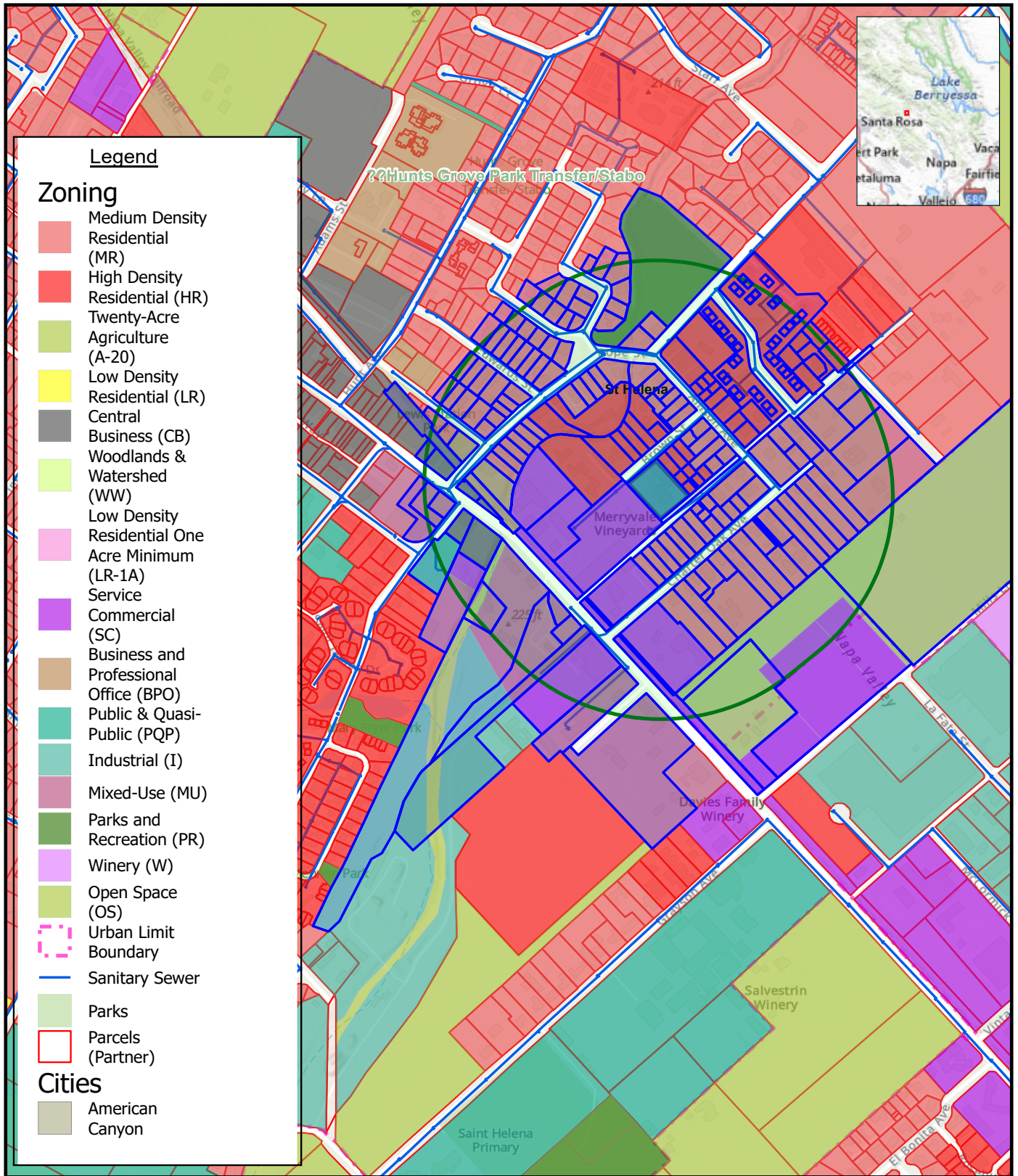
St. Helena High School

Printed On: 10/27/2025

Produced by Napa County GIS

0 2.25 4.5 9 mi

Disclaimer: This map was prepared for informational purposes only. No liability is assumed for the accuracy of the data delineated hereon.

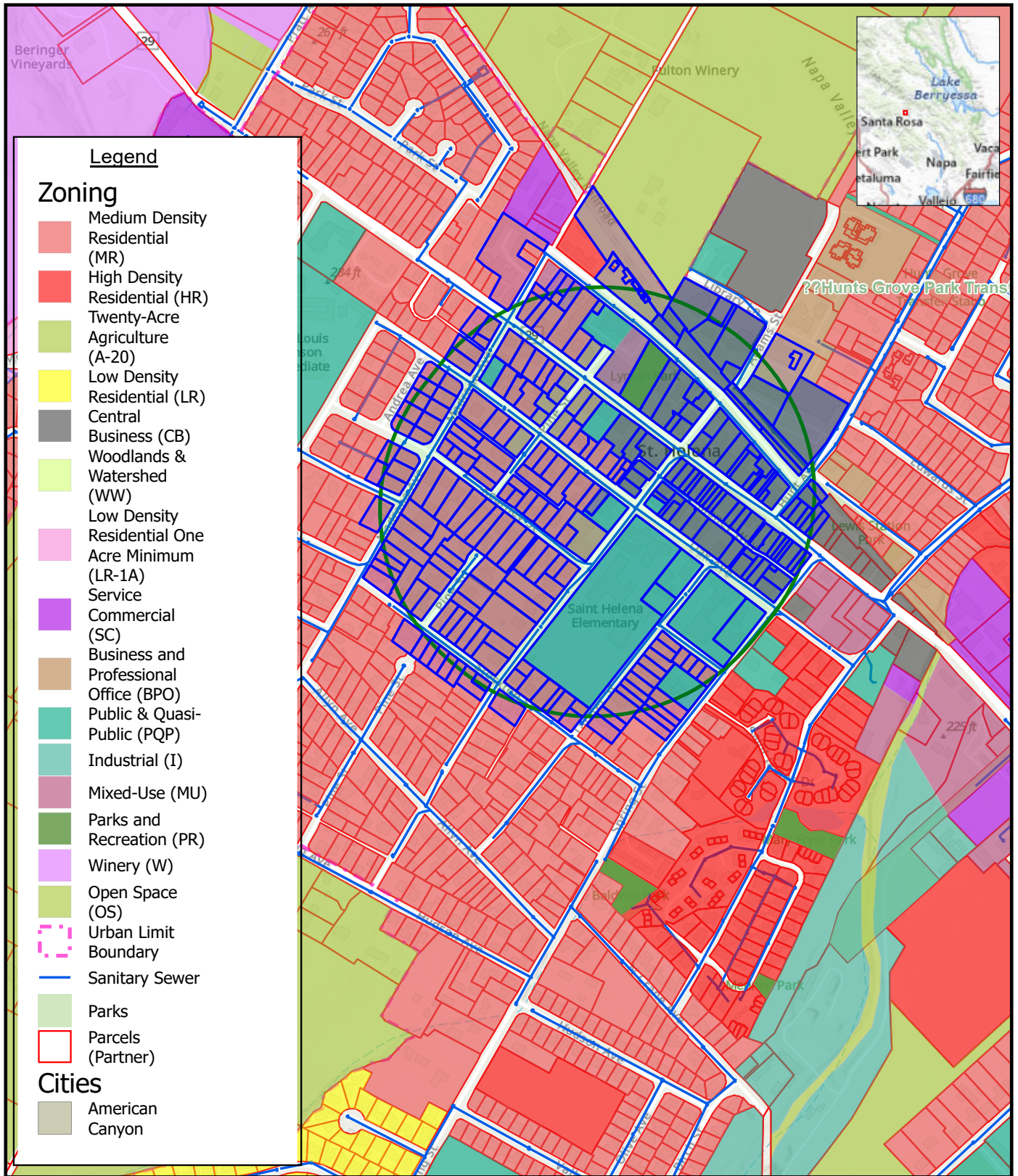


Mila's Preschool and Childcare Center

Printed On: 10/27/2025

Produced by Napa County GIS

Disclaimer: This map was prepared for informational purposes only. No liability is assumed for the accuracy of the data delineated hereon.

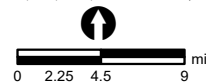


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Sun and Stars Montessori School

Printed On: 10/27/2025

Produced by Napa County GIS



Disclaimer: This map was prepared for informational purposes only. No liability is assumed for the accuracy of the data delineated hereon.

From: [Bobbi Monnette](#)
To: [Xinia Gamero](#)
Subject: Re: Item 5.1 - please distribute to the planning commission and the city council
Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2025 7:15:20 PM

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I am opposed to the proposed changes to section 17.22.050.

I find the following statement to be arrogant and disrespectful of those who created the "previous version of the Zoning Code", as well as inaccurate.

"In addition, most uses involving alcoholic beverage sales are already subject to either a Conditional Use Permit or Minor Use Permit, which provide sufficient discretionary review to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses."

If the "Conditional Use Permit or Minor Use Permit" was thought to have provided 'sufficient discretionary review to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses', the current ordinance section 17.22.050 would not been included. What changes in thinking having occurred since this ordinance section was last accepted and now?

I do not agree that the proposed changes comply with the following required "relevant findings".

"The proposed use will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the public or to property and residents in the vicinity."

Alcohol serving businesses directly across from a part of the High School campus that provides the main ingress and egress for walking, biking, and auto driven students to the campus, has been shown to have negative effects on, and consequences for high school students. The sight, smell and knowledge of the proximity and use of alcoholic beverages can be detrimental to anyone in recovery for alcohol abuse/addiction. In addition, daily exposure to the sight, smell, and proximity of alcohol dosing, normalizes and encourages the use of that drug.

I propose that another alcohol serving establishment directly across from St. Helena High School, IS "...materially detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the public or to property and residents in the vicinity."

Children learn more from the modeled behavior of the adults around them than from the words spoken to them by the adults around them. No matter how many "Mock Crash", "Every 15 Minutes", "Shattered Dreams" demonstrations are presented to our high school students each year, how the adults in their community behave will have a far greater impact on their behavior. It's not what you say, it's what you do that matters.

With this in min, it is clear that the proposed change in Item 5/1, can and will be "...materially detrimental to the health, safety and welfare...." of our students, and, therefore, to the public in general.

I, therefore, respectfully request that you do NOT change this ordinance, and, instead, enforce it rigorously when the wellbeing of our citizens, especially our children, is a risk. I believe the proposed replacement of A&W with new owners offers this righteous and sane opportunity to walk our talk regarding drug use and personal and public safety.

I am,

Sincerely yours,

Barbara Monnette LCSW

In addition, most uses involving alcoholic beverage sales are already subject to either a Conditional Use Permit or Minor Use Permit, which provide sufficient discretionary review to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses. These permit processes require the following relevant findings: The proposed use is appropriate for the zoning district in which it is located, compatible with uses allowed in the zoning district, and complies with all other applicable provisions of the zoning code; and The proposed use will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the public or to property and residents in the vicinity.

This 1000 foot buffer standard was included in the 2023 comprehensive zoning code update however the zoning code consultant may not have been aware of the constraints it would create with so many schools in proximity to the downtown and commercial zones. The prior zoning code had no locational criteria, but the findings required consideration of distance of alcohol uses in relation to schools. ADU Building Area Exemption When the city prepared the last amendment to the ADU ordinance this year, one correction to the residential development standards was omitted and staff is processing this correction as part of this ZOA 25-005. The amendment to Table 17.16.030(B), Footnote 5a would update the ADU exemption from 400 to 800 square feet to align with current state law. All proposed changes are administrative in nature and do not modify existing development standards or policy direction. ANALYSIS 1. Amendment of Section 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales) The amendment to Section 17.22.050 (Alcoholic Beverage Sales) would delete Subsection D "Location," which currently prohibit alcohol-related uses within 1,000 feet of a public park, nursery school, preschool, or day care facility; a public or private school; or an alcohol or other drug abuse recovery or treatment facility. To ensure that distance to schools is still evaluated as part of the alcohol sales ordinance, it is recommended that the following additional finding is added to Section 17.22.050(F) Findings : "7. Distance of the proposed establishment from public/private schools." As stated in the Background section of this staff report, the previous version of the Zoning Code did not include any location-based separation requirements for alcoholic beverage sales. In addition, most uses involving alcoholic beverage sales are already subject to either a Conditional Use Permit or Minor Use Permit, which provide sufficient discretionary review to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses. These permit processes require the following relevant findings: The proposed use is appropriate for the zoning district in which it is located, compatible with uses allowed in the zoning district, and complies with all other applicable provisions of the zoning code; and The proposed use will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the public or to property and residents in the vicinity.

On Monday, October 27, 2025 at 04:19:19 PM PDT, City of St. Helena
<cwnotification@icompasstech.com> wrote:

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Please visit the following link to view the document:

[Planning Commission - 04 Nov 2025](#)

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www.cityofsthelelena.org

[Contact Us](#)

Planning Commission Members and Staff,

Could we please place an agenda item on the calendar for full review and discussion of our zoning code language as it pertains to ADU's?

The commission has publicly stated that ADU's do not contribute to St Helena's housing stock. This statement is contrary to state and national literature and comprehensive studies on the matter. I would argue that St Helena's approach to ADU code language and general policy regarding their use is contrary to an approach that encourages their use as housing. This is an important distinction. There is a difference between creating policy that drives development by an upper echelon of income class over development for specific need and purpose as a contribution toward housing policy.

I have heard first hand accounts of many seniors in our community who would like to have an ADU on their property specifically for use by full time nursing staff so they can stay and age in their home. Unfortunately most find that the fees around ADU development in St Helena are prohibitive.

Could the commission please speak to why the language of the code has been drafted the way it has, separate from the verbiage and basic policy dictated by the state? The commission passed forward an update to the city council in April that introduced specific language around architectural restrictions that seem to be arbitrary and contrary to the rest of the zoning code.

-Why is height for ADU's calculated in a different manner from the height of other structures?

-Why is there a 30' setback for transparent glazing below 6' in height for an ADU of 801 square feet or greater?

-Why is it dictated that the roof pitch of an ADU match the pitch of the main dwelling?

-Why is it dictated that the siding of an ADU match the siding of the main dwelling?

Dictating cookie cutter versions of main dwellings is not a sophisticated approach to architectural solutions that contribute to housing stock.

Can the commission please speak to why they are now revising code around the 400 square foot exemption to the legal 800 square foot exemption after the existing version of the code had been reviewed by legal, and staff, and the commission previously? The current published verbiage was presented to the council under the guise of updating the code to legal conformity with current state laws.

There seems to be a systemic issue around existing zoning code language and the discovery of legal issues with the language and subsequent time and resources expensed in their repair. This is not a sustainable process. Does the commission have an approach that would be better suited to efficiency and a more concise use of tax payer dollars?

Please advise.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our town.

Sincerely,

Joshua Parke

From: [Charles Covell](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Cc: [Michelle Covell](#)
Subject: RE: DRAFT Public Comment - LMK
Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 3:03:53 PM

Hi Erika,
 May I submit the following corrected version?

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express concern about the ongoing issues in the zoning code update process — particularly the procedural breakdowns, recurring errors, and the significant time and public resources required to correct them.

While several errors have already been identified and addressed — including, but not limited to, the well-known “uncovered porch” provision and the items before you this evening — it seems likely that many more remain. The length and complexity of the 397-page document make it almost inevitable that additional inconsistencies and oversights will surface as review continues.

For example, in reviewing Section 17.22.030(7g), *Architectural Standards for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)*, I noted a subsection requiring that any ADU located within 30 feet of a property line must either use entirely frosted glazing or maintain sill heights above six feet. Very few homeowners contemplating an ADU have enough space to provide a 30-foot setback from all property lines, and such design limitations seem unnecessarily restrictive.

Similarly, subsection (A) requires that “the materials and colors of the exterior walls, roof, and windows and doors must be the same as those of the primary dwelling.” It is unclear to me how this does not violate the First Amendment. Beyond the practical challenges, such a provision could raise legitimate questions regarding freedom of design expression. Are architects, designers, and homeowners now expected to work entirely within aesthetic constraints imposed by regulation rather than guided by design integrity and individual vision?

The state laws left latitude for local jurisdictions to create objective standards. It’s my opinion that the objective standards implemented here have little basis in community consensus. They are ill-considered, absurd, and will discourage the construction of aDu’s which are, despite the opinion of some, an effective tool to address the affordable housing shortage.

Thank you for your attention and continued public service.

Sincerely,
 Charles V. Covell
 Park Street

Thomas W. Redmon Trust
1620 Sylvaner Ave.
St.Helena, CA 94574
tom@tomredmon.com
November 4, 2025

To:
City of St.Helena Planning Commission
1480 Main Street
St.Helena, CA 94574

Subject: Support for the Recommendation to Adopt Ordinance Amending Sections 17.22.050 of the St.Helena Municipal Code

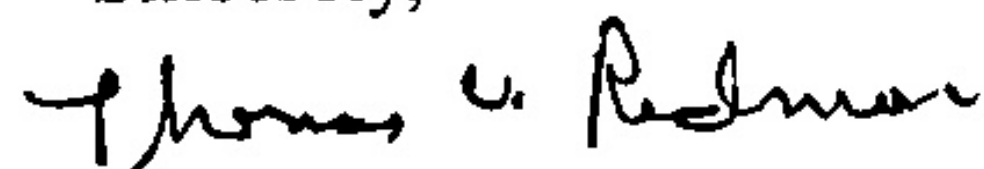
I am writing to express my strong support for the recommendation that the City Council amend Section 17.22.050 of the St. Helena Municipal Code. Specifically, I support revising the location restriction that prohibits establishments from operating within one thousand feet of public schools.

As a resident of St. Helena and the owner of 501 Main Street, I believe this change will have a positive impact on the city's commercial development and provide greater flexibility for local businesses.

Davies Vineyards, located at 1210 Grayson Avenue, serves as a positive example of how thoughtful, well-managed businesses can successfully coexist within our community while enhancing St. Helena's economic vitality and character.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Redmon