

# CHAPTER 9: Constraints on the Development of Housing

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Various interrelated factors can constrain the ability of the private and public sectors to provide adequate housing, making it difficult to meet the housing needs for all economic segments of the community. These factors can be categorized as: (1) governmental constraints and (2) non-governmental constraints.

Governmental constraints consist of land use controls, development standards, processing fees, development impact fees, code enforcement, site improvement costs, development permit and approval processing, and provision for a variety of housing.

Non-governmental constraints consist of land availability, the environment, vacancy rates, land cost, construction costs, and availability of financing.

## Governmental Constraints

Governmental constraints are policies, standards, requirements, or actions imposed by the various levels of government upon land and housing ownership and development. Although federal and state agencies play a role in the imposition of governmental constraints, these agencies are beyond the influence of local government and are therefore not addressed in this Housing Element.

## Zoning Standards

**Table 22** presents the County's development standards, which are applied to all new residential developments.

**Table 22: Development Standards**

Zone District	Maximum Bldg. Height <sup>2</sup>	Lot Width	Minimum Yard Setback					Min. Lot Area (sq. ft.)	Lot Area per unit (sq. ft.)	Maximum Lot Coverage
			Front	Side Parcels < 1 acre	Side Parcels $\geq$ 1 acre	Rear Parcels < 1 acre	Rear Parcels $\geq$ 1 acre			
2-R	35 ft	60 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	21,780	-	50%
3-R	35 ft	60 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	14,520	-	50%
7-R	35 ft	60 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	6,223	-	50%
M-R	35 ft	60 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	6,000	1,998	50%
S-1	35 ft	120 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	43,560	-	50% <sup>3</sup>
S-3	35 ft	150 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	130,680	-	50% <sup>4</sup>
R-10	35 ft	300 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	435,600	-	50% <sup>5</sup>
R-20	35 ft	300 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	871,200	-	- <sup>6</sup>
AP	35 ft	N/A	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	3,484,800	-	1 Acre <sup>7</sup>
GA	35 ft	300 ft	20 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	5 ft/story	30 ft	1,742,400	-	1 Acre <sup>7</sup>
MH	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup>

Source: Plumas County Code, Title 9, Planning & Zoning, 2025.

<sup>1</sup> As required by the primary zoning in which the MH (Manufactured Home Combining Zone) zoning is combined.

<sup>2</sup> Height limit only, does not apply to number of stories.

<sup>3</sup> Except that on any parcel which is at least one acre in size, each dwelling unit and accessory buildings shall cover no more than one acre.

<sup>4</sup> Except that on any parcel which is at least three acres in size, each dwelling unit and accessory buildings shall cover no more than one acre.

<sup>5</sup> Except that on any parcel which is at least ten (10) acres in size, each dwelling unit and accessory buildings shall cover no more than one acre.

<sup>6</sup> For parcels at least twenty (20) acres in size, each dwelling unit and accessory buildings shall cover no more than one acre.

<sup>7</sup> Each dwelling unit and accessory buildings shall cover no more than one acre. Miscellaneous permitted compatible uses shall cover no more than one acre

## Parking Standards

The County's parking requirements vary according to the type of dwelling unit, as shown in **Table 23**. Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.414, Parking and loading, standards permit that any parking and loading requirement may be modified, as necessary, by the Planning Director, including those for transitional and supportive housing and group homes. The County's Code does not specify or require guest parking. Parking is not an issue with generally little to no impacts on housing cost and supply and the ability to achieve maximum densities for multiple-family "M-R" development.

**Table 23: Residential Parking Standards**

Type of Residential Development	Number of Required Parking Spaces (can be covered or uncovered)
Single Family	Two parking spaces per dwelling unit
Multifamily	
One bedroom or studio	Two parking spaces per unit
Two bedrooms	Two parking spaces per unit
Three or more bedrooms	Two parking spaces per unit
Accessory Dwelling Unit	One Parking Space, except as modified in Article 45, Accessory Dwelling Units of Title 9 of Chapter 2 of the Plumas County Code, as follows: No off-street parking spaces shall be required for accessory dwelling units that meet any of the following listed instances: (i) The accessory dwelling unit is located within one-half mile of public transit. (ii) The accessory dwelling unit is located within an architecturally and historically significant historic district. (iii) The accessory dwelling unit is part of the existing primary dwelling unit or an existing accessory structure. (iv) When on-street parking permits are required but not offered to the occupant of the accessory dwelling unit. (v) When there is a car share vehicle located within one block of the accessory dwelling unit. (vi) When a permit application for an accessory dwelling unit is submitted with a permit application to create a new single-family dwelling or a new multiple-family dwelling structure on the same lot.
Mobilehome Parks (Manufactured/Modular Home)	Two parking spaces per dwelling unit

*Source: Plumas County Zoning Ordinance, 2025.*

## Provisions for a Variety of Housing

Housing element law specifies that jurisdictions must identify adequate sites to be made available through appropriate zoning and development standards to encourage the development of various types of housing for all economic segments of the population. This includes single-family housing, multi-family housing, manufactured housing, residential care facilities, SROs, mobilehomes, employee housing, ADUs, emergency shelters, and transitional and supportive housing and navigation centers. **Table 24** summarizes the residential uses permitted, not permitted, and those that require a special use permit by zoning district.

**Table 24: Housing Types Permitted by Zoning District**

Residential Use	Zone										
	2-R	3-R	7-R	M-R	S-1	S-3	R-10	R-20	AP	GA	MH <sup>1</sup>
Single-Family — Detached	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Single-Family — Attached	-	-	-	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	
2-4 Dwelling Units	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	-	P	
5+ Dwelling Units	-	-	-	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Residential Care $\leq$ 6P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	-	-	
Residential Care > 6P	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	-	-	
Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Manufactured Homes	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Mobilehomes	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Employee Housing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	P	
Transitional Housing	P <sup>3</sup>										
Permanent Supportive Housing	P <sup>3</sup>										
Accessory Dwelling Units	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Emergency Shelter/Navigation Centers	-	-	-	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	

Source: Plumas County Code, Title 9 – Planning and Zoning, 2025.

<sup>1</sup> As required by the primary zoning in which the MH (Manufactured Home Combining Zone) zoning is combined.

<sup>2</sup> SROs defined as “Rooming facility” in Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.283. “Rooming facility” shall mean a group of two (2) or more guest rooms for non-transient lodging and may include provisions for board. These units can be part of larger buildings and may lack a full kitchen and bathroom facilities.

<sup>3</sup> See Program H 4.1 – County to review and revise, as necessary, its Zoning Ordinance to meet State law and define and consider transitional and supportive housing a residential use permitted by right in all zones that permit residential uses, subject to only those restrictions that apply to residential uses of the same type in the same zone.

“P” = Permitted

“S” = Special Use Permit

“-” = Not Permitted

## **Emergency Shelters and Transitional and Supportive Housing**

SB 2 (Cedillo, 2007) requires every jurisdictions in the state of California to allow for emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing.

The California Health and Safety Code (Section 50801) defines an emergency shelter as “housing with minimal supportive services for homeless persons that is limited to occupancy of six months or less by a homeless person, although more typically around 30 days. No individual or households may be denied emergency shelter because of an inability to pay.”

Transitional housing is a type of supportive housing used to facilitate the movement of people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing. A person experiencing homelessness may live in a transitional apartment for a predetermined period of time, however not less than six months, and generally up to 24 months, while receiving supportive services that enable independent living. Supportive housing is permanent rental housing linked to a range of support services designed to enable residents to maintain stable housing and lead fuller lives.

The County's Zoning Ordinance was updated in October 2019 to accommodate emergency shelters in the “M-R” zone as a use permitted by right with no discretionary review. Emergency shelters are not subject to additional development standards, processing, or regulatory requirements beyond what applies to residential development in the “M-R” zone. Further, as part of Program H 4.2, the County will evaluate adopting development and managerial standards that are consistent with Government Code Sec. 65583(a)(4). These standards may include such items as lighting, on-site management, maximum number of beds or persons to be served nightly by the facility, off-street parking based on demonstrated need, and security during hours that the emergency shelter is in operation.

### **Point-in-Time Count**

In 2023, the NorCal Continuum of Care Point-in-Time count identified 134 homeless people in Plumas County (76 unsheltered and 58 sheltered). In 2023, the NorCal Continuum of Care Point-in-Time count identified 12 homeless people in Sierra County, all unsheltered.

In comparison for Plumas County, in 2022, the Point-in-Time count identified 131 homeless people (86 unsheltered and 45 sheltered), and in 2020, 115 homeless people were identified (77 unsheltered and 38 sheltered); therefore, homelessness has increased in Plumas County year over year.

### **North Star Navigation Center**

PCIRC, Plumas County's homelessness and CE provider, broke ground in 2022 and completed construction of Phase 1 in 2024 on the County's first emergency and transitional housing Navigation Center under the state's Low Barrier housing model pursuant to Government Code Sec. 65660 – 65668 (AB 101, Weiner, 2019). The parcel is 1 acre and is zoned “M-R” Multiple Family Residential.

The NorthStar Navigation Center is an appropriate site for a year-round emergency shelter as the parcel has utility services, including water, sewer, and power. Furthermore, the site is located in Quincy in proximity to retail services, public transportation, medical facilities, and employment opportunities.

A Low Barrier Navigation Center pursuant to Government Code Sec. 65660 – 65668 (AB 101, Weiner, 2019) means a Housing First approach, low-barrier, service-enriched shelter focused on moving people into permanent housing that provides temporary living facilities while case managers connect individuals experiencing homelessness to income, public benefits, health services, shelter, and housing. “Low Barrier” means best practices to reduce barriers to entry, and may include, but is not limited to: the presence of partners if it is not a population-specific site, such as for survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault, women, or youth; pets; the storage of possessions; and privacy, such as partitions around beds in a dormitory setting or in larger rooms containing more than two beds, or private rooms.

The North Star Navigation Center provides immediate emergency shelter and transitional housing services to the homeless, chronically homeless, transitioning offenders, the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) for seniors and/or disabled, and former foster youth in Plumas.

The main building (Phase 1) includes a 27-bed capacity emergency shelter with congregate beds and non-congregate bedrooms for families, associated congregate and non-congregate bathrooms, day use room areas, a kitchen and dining room, administrative offices for staff, and storage. More specifically, there are 12 beds in the bunkroom (7 male and 5 female) and three family rooms with a total 15 bed capacity.

Ohana Village (Phase 2) will offer transitional housing that includes 26 detached cabins ranging in size from studio units (16 beds, one of which is accessible), 1 bedroom-units (16 beds, one of which is accessible), and 2 bedroom-units (8 beds, one of which is accessible). The 1- and 2-bedroom units will include half baths, while the studio units utilize a common building with congregate bathrooms that also have shower facilities for all Ohana Village units. A second common building will include Ohana Village resident dining and there is also a maintenance building and outdoor play area.

Supportive service staffing includes a Navigation Center Manager, Housing Navigator, Behavioral Health Counselor, Alcohol and Drug Counselor, HDAP Disability Advocate, and Grief Recovery Specialist with the primary purpose to bring all activities in-house and on-site. Educational opportunities and trainings will be provided to North Star Navigation Center residents including money management, life skills, and workforce development skills. Expected outcomes include:

- Increasing access to emergency and transitional housing.
- Delivery of a comprehensive array of supportive services.
- Reducing the number of days of homelessness.
- Increasing access to permanent housing and housing stability.
- Developing a ‘systems change’ in how Plumas County addresses homelessness for its most vulnerable residents.

## **Unmet Emergency Shelter Bed Capacity Need**

The North Star Navigation Center serves Plumas and Sierra counties, based on walk-ins and referrals from partner service providers such as the Sierra County Behavioral Health Department, Plumas County Behavioral Health Department, and Plumas County Probation Department. The North Star Navigation includes an existing 27-bed capacity emergency shelter completed in 2024, in addition to the future construction of 26 detached cabins (40-bed capacity) under Phase 2, for a total of 67 beds.

In 2023, 76 individuals were identified as unsheltered in Plumas County and 12 in Sierra County, and with a 27-bed capacity emergency shelter as of June 2025, it leaves a 61-bed unmet need. When Phase 2 of the Northstar Navigation Center is complete (anticipated to be operational within the 2024-2029 planning period), with an additional 40-bed capacity, the remaining unmet need will be 21 individuals.

The number of acres required to accommodate the unmet need of approximately 21 homeless individuals in a year-round emergency shelter was determined based on the average density (i.e., persons per acre) of the Northstar Navigation Center (1 acre parcel), at 67 beds or 67 persons per acre. Based on this analysis, the County has concluded that in order to meet the overall capacity needs of the potential 21 individuals requiring shelter in Plumas County in the 2024-2029 planning period, a site of not less than 0.50 acre is needed to develop an adequate shelter to meet the anticipated need.

Appendix B, Vacant and Underutilized Land Inventory, reflects “M-R” zoned parcels that are of sufficient size (e.g., 168 Hot Spring Road, Greenville and 1967 Claremont Way, Quincy), with adequate utilities and in the vicinity of amenities, that could accommodate the development of an emergency shelter facility to meet the total unmet need.

## **Housing for Persons with Disabilities**

In compliance with SB 520 (Chesbro, 2001), a complete evaluation of the County’s zoning laws, practices, and policies was conducted and no constraints to housing development for persons with disabilities was found, with the exception of providing for a reasonable accommodation procedure in the County’s Zoning Ordinance:

- **Reasonable accommodations.** The County’s Zoning Ordinance does not have a reasonable accommodation procedure but has included Program H 5.2 to come into compliance with SB 520.
- **Separation requirements.** The County’s Zoning Ordinance does not impose any separation requirements between residential care facilities.
- **Site planning requirements.** The site planning requirements for residential care facilities are no different than for other residential uses in the same zone.
- **Definition of family.** The definition of family under the Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.232 (Family) states “Family” shall mean “one or more persons living together in a dwelling unit, with common access to, and common use of all living, kitchen, and eating areas within the dwelling unit.” Program 8 of the 2019-2024 Housing Element directed the County to review and revise, as necessary, the Zoning Ordinance to ensure the County’s definition of “Family” is consistent with federal and state fair housing laws and is not a constraint on the development of housing for persons with disabilities. Plumas County Code, Ord. No. 2024-1154, adopted May 7, 2024, by the Board of Supervisors modified the definition of “family” satisfying the objective of Program 8.

## **Accessory Dwelling Units**

Plumas County Code, Sec. 9-2.201.1. defines “Accessory dwelling unit” or “ADU” as “an attached or a detached residential dwelling unit which provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons. It shall include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation and is located on the same parcel as a proposed or existing single-family dwelling unit or multiple-family dwelling structure is or will be situated. An accessory dwelling unit shall also include an efficiency unit, as defined in Sec. 17958.1 of the Health and Safety Code and a manufactured home, as defined in Sec. 18007 of the Health and Safety Code. For more information on accessory dwelling units, refer to Article 45, Accessory Dwelling Units, of this chapter.”

An accessory dwelling unit or “ADU” is a secondary dwelling unit with complete independent living facilities for one or more persons and can generally take four forms:

- Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.201.2. “Attached accessory dwelling unit” shall mean a second independent living unit attached to the primary dwelling unit.
- Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.201.3. “Detached accessory dwelling unit” shall mean a second independent living unit separated from the primary dwelling unit.
- Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.201.4. “Conversion accessory dwelling unit” shall mean a space such as a garage, primary bedroom, or other accessory structure that is converted into a second independent living unit.
- Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.201.5. “Junior accessory dwelling unit” or “JADU” shall mean a type of accessory dwelling unit that is contained entirely within the primary dwelling unit, including attached garages and shall not exceed five hundred (500) square feet. A junior accessory dwelling unit may include separate sanitation facilities or may share sanitation facilities with the existing primary dwelling unit.

AB 1866 (Wright, 2002) requires local governments to use a ministerial process when considering second-unit applications for the purpose of facilitating the production of affordable housing. To comply with State Law, the County has included Program H 2.1, which commits to reviewing the Zoning Ordinance and revising, as needed, to be in compliance with State ADU Law.

## ADU Ordinance

On May 7, 2024, the Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted an ADU Ordinance (Article 45 Accessory Dwelling Units, of Chapter 2 Zoning, of Title 9 Planning and Zoning, of the Plumas County Code) to permit ADUs and JADUs in zoning districts consistent with State ADU Law (California Government Code Secs. 65852.150 through 65852.23) and to establish ministerial permit procedures, development standards, and regulations, in addition to the inclusion of new relevant definitions.

Pursuant to Article 45, attached, detached, and conversion accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units are permitted in any zone where a dwelling unit or dwelling units are permitted, subject to the provisions of Article 45, including: Single-Family Residential Zones (2-R, 3-R, 7-R), Multiple-Family Residential Zone (M-R), Suburban Zone (S-1), Secondary Suburban Zone (S-3), Rural Zone (R-10 and R-20), Core Commercial Zone (C-1), Periphery Commercial Zone (C-2), Convenience Commercial Zone (C-3), Recreation Commercial Zone (R-C), Recreation Zones (Rec-P, Rec-1, Rec-3, Rec-10, Rec-20), Heavy Industrial Zone (I-1), Light Industrial Zone (I-2), Agricultural Preserve Zone (AP), General Agriculture Zone (GA), General Forest Zone (GF), and Mining Zone (M).

## Local Processing and Permit Procedures

Shown in **Table 25** are the typical permit processing times for residential development. Ministerial and discretionary approval findings and timing vary and follow Plumas County Code titles and State law requirements, including the CEQA, Subdivision Map Act, and Permit Streamlining Act. The Planning Department finds approval certainty for typical single- and multiple-family by right development that is consistent with the Plumas County Zoning Code and the 2035 Plumas County General Plan.

**Table 25: Typical County Permit Process and Timelines**

Project Type	Approving Body	Timeline
Ministerial Building Permit Review	Planning & Building Services, may include Environmental Health	3 to 6 weeks
Discretionary Special Use Permit	Zoning Administrator	6 to 9 months
Discretionary Zone Change	Planning Commission/ Board of Supervisors	9 to 12 months
Discretionary General Plan Amendment and/or Zone Change	Planning Commission/ Board of Supervisors	6 to 12 months
Ministerial Site Plan Review	Planning & Building Services, may include Public Works and/or Engineering	2 to 4 weeks
Ministerial Architectural/ Design Review	Design Review Committee	3 to 4 weeks
Discretionary Tentative Subdivision Map	Zoning Administrator	12 to 18 months
Discretionary Tentative Parcel Map	Zoning Administrator	9 to 12 months
Discretionary CEQA – Negative Declaration (ND)/ Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)	Zoning Administrator/ Board of Supervisors	6 to 12 months
Discretionary CEQA – EIR (Environmental Impact Report)	Zoning Administrator/ Board of Supervisors	1 to 2 years

Source: Plumas County, 2025.

Shown in **Table 26** are the typical processing procedures for residential development.

**Table 26 Typical Processing Procedures by Project Type**

	Single-Family Unit	Subdivision	Multifamily < 5 Units	Multifamily $\geq 5$ Units
Typical Approval Requirements	Site Plan Building Permit	Tentative Map Review (including approval by Zoning Administrator)	Site Plan Building Permit	Site Plan Building Permit
	May include Design Review, if in Design Review Area	May include Design Review, if in Design Review Area	May include Design Review, if in Design Review Area	May include Design Review, if in Design Review Area
Est. Total Processing Time	4-8 weeks	12 months	8 weeks	12 weeks

Source: Plumas County, 2025.

Program H 1.2 ensures that the County will continually seek to improve development review and permit processing times and procedures to minimize the time required for review and project approval.

## Typical Densities for Development

Plumas County is rural in nature and made up of small, diverse communities. There has been little housing development since the economic recession of 2008/09, although post 2021 Dixie Fire and Beckwourth Complex Fire, reinvigorated efforts are occurring to develop housing. Densities within the County vary depending on infrastructure and viability of land (e.g., topography, heavily forested, soils/geotechnical). Based on previous trends, the typical density for development has been approximately 3 units per acre where public utilities (sewer, water, power) are available. Outside of towns and within rural communities, rural residential densities are typically 1 dwelling unit per 5 to 10 acres, and multifamily densities in community areas are typically 7 to 10 units per acre.

## Length of Time for Approval of a Building Permit

The length of time to obtain a building permit is dependent on the capacity of the Planning, Building, and Environmental Health department staff. Depending upon the complexity of the project, the typical timeframe from application to obtaining a building permit could be 2 to 4 weeks, 4 to 8 weeks, or 8 to 12 weeks.

The Plumas County Building Department 1.0 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff in 2024 included one (1) Building Services Director/Building Official, two (2) Permit Technicians one (1) Senior Permit Technicians, one (1) Building Inspector I, and one (1) Building Inspector/Plans Examiner. In addition, the Building Department funds one (1) Fiscal Officer position at 0.35 FTE.

The Plumas County Planning Department staff in 2024 accounted for two (2) FTE staff members, including a Planning Director and Associate Planner. The other Planning Department 1.0 FTE positions of Assistant Planning Director and a flexibility allocated Assistant/Associate/Senior Planner remained vacant. In the FY24/25 budget, the Board of Supervisors additionally funded a 1.0 FTE Executive Assistant position for the Planning Department, although no candidates were interviewed in 2024, and the position remained vacant as of the end of the year. The Planning Department also funds one (1) Fiscal Officer position at 0.5 FTE and one Extra Help Planner position at approximately 24 hours per week.

The Plumas County GIS Division budgets for one (1) full-time 1.0 FTE GIS Coordinator position, which continued to be staffed in 2024. In addition, GIS funds one (1) Fiscal Officer position at 0.05 FTE.

## Design Guidelines

The County implements individual design (architectural review) guidelines in the communities of Quincy, Chester, Johnsville, and LaPorte and Little Grass Valley. These design guidelines do not constrain the development of housing but rather provide more specificity and guidance. For more information on the design review guidelines, visit the County's Planning Department Design Review Areas webpage at: <https://www.plumascounty.us/484/Design-Review-Areas>.

**Quincy Design Review Guidelines:** The Quincy Design Review Guidelines (<https://www.plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/24396/Quincy-Design-Review-Guidelines?bId=2>) only apply to the areas in Quincy that have the Special Plan Design Review Area (SP-DRA). A map showing the parcels where the guidelines apply is included on page 7 of the Quincy Design Review Guidelines PDF. The parcels that are zoned M-R (Multiple-Family Residential) and have the combining zone SP-DRA are limited in Quincy. The guidelines pertain to new construction, exterior modifications, commercial landscapes, and signage, which are in the Design Review Area and visible from the street. Projects are required to be approved by the Quincy Design Review Committee prior to the issuance of a permit.

The guidelines include voluntary and mandatory requirements (i.e., goals are voluntary, and guidelines are mandatory, but the guidelines may have exceptions granted based on the circumstances or if the project will benefit the public). The guidelines apply to commercial and residential structures. Commercial structure guidelines address building height, building width, building setback, proportion of openings, horizontal rhythms, roof form, architectural style, building materials, color, awnings/sidewalk coverings, roof projections, and maintenance of vacant buildings. The residential guidelines include the review of building height, architectural style, building materials, color, and awnings. The guidelines also apply to signs and streetscapes/landscapes.

#### **Chester Design Review Guidelines:**

<https://www.plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/24398/Chester-Design-Review-Guidelines?bId=>

The Chester Design Review Guidelines apply to the areas along Highway 36 (Main Street) on parcels that have the SP-DRA combining zone. A map showing the parcels where the guidelines apply is included on page 6 of the Chester Design Review Guidelines. The Chester Design Review Guidelines mirror the Quincy Design Review Guidelines in structure. The guidelines include commercial and residential structure guidelines as well as guidelines for signs and streetscapes/landscapes.

The guidelines apply to new construction, exterior modifications, commercial landscapes, and signage, which are within the Design Review Area and visible from the street. The commercial structure requirements address building height, building width, building setback, building orientation, horizontal rhythms, roof form, architectural style, building materials, color, awnings/sidewalk coverings, roof projections, and maintenance of vacant buildings. The residential guidelines entail the review of building height, architectural style, building materials, color, and awnings.

#### **Johnsville Design Review Guidelines (Style Book):**

<https://www.plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/24397/Johnsville-Style-Book?bId=>

The Johnsville Design Review Guidelines also known as the Style Book, apply to the entire historic town of Johnsville. The guidelines relate to maintaining the historic nature of the architecture, exterior siding, foundations, roofing, exterior finish, and optional materials.

#### **La Porte and Little Grass Valley Guidelines and Ideas:**

[https://www.plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/48990/La-Porte\\_Little-Grass-Valley\\_SP-Zoning\\_GuidelinesIdeas?bId=](https://www.plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/48990/La-Porte_Little-Grass-Valley_SP-Zoning_GuidelinesIdeas?bId=)

The La Porte and Little Grass Valley Special Guidelines and Ideas apply to the historic town of La Porte. Page 2 of the guidelines shows a map of the parcels where the guidelines apply. The Little Grass Valley Guidelines and Ideas apply to lots in the vicinity of the lake that is zoned "R-C" (Recreation Commercial). The guidelines apply to all exterior building activities for commercial and residential structures, except painting. Guidelines are included for signs, fencing, and buildings (design, materials, and windows).

## **Planning and Building Permit Fees**

Total development costs are similar for both single and multifamily developments. **Table 27** shows the current planning fees. Zoning, including development standards, and the Planning and Building Services Fee Schedule, in addition to other handouts and permit applications are posted on the Planning Department's website at: <https://www.plumascounty.us/127/Fee-Schedule---Zoning---PRA---Handouts-->.

**Table 27: Planning Fees (2025)**

Fee Category	Fee Amount	
Planning Applications or Permits	Single-Family	Multifamily
Variance	\$1,893.00	\$1,893.00
Special Use Permit	\$1,301.00	\$1,301.00
Special Use Permit Amendment	\$723.00	\$723.00
General Plan Amendment	\$1,658.00	\$1,658.00
Zone Change	\$1,555.00	\$1,555.00
Technical Report Review (Traffic Studies, Grading Plans, Erosion Control Plans, Flood Studies, Drainage Studies, and Geotechnical Reports)	\$1,000 deposit billed at \$115.48/hr. (Public Works) and \$500 deposit billed at \$96.35/hr. (Engineering)	\$1,000 deposit billed at \$115.48/hr. (Public Works) and \$500 deposit billed at \$96.35/hr. (Engineering)
Planned Development Permit (without Tentative Map)	\$2,403 + \$125/lot	\$2,403 + \$125/lot
Planned Development Permit (with Tentative Map)	\$1,826.00	\$1,826.00
Specific Plan	No such plan/associated fee	No such plan/associated fee
Development Agreement	\$3186. + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$115.48/hr. (Public Works) + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$96.35/hr. (Engineering)	\$3186. + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$115.48/hr. (Public Works) + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$96.35/hr. (Engineering)
Development Agreement Amendment	\$1672 + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$115.48/hr. (Public Works) + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$96.35/hr. (Engineering)	\$1,672 + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$115.48/hr. (Public Works) + \$1,000 deposit billed at \$96.35/hr. (Engineering))
Site Development Permit	\$1,465.00	\$1,465.00
Modification of Development Standards	\$1,742 + \$25/lot	\$1,742 + \$25/lot
Fire Safe Driveway Review (Engineering Dept.)	\$413.00	\$413.00
Subdivision Fees or Applications	Single-Family	Multifamily
Certificate of Compliance	\$1,009.00	\$1,009.00
Lot Line Adjustment	\$1,150+ \$73/lot	\$1,150+ \$73/lot
Owner Initiated Merger	\$202	\$202
Tentative Map	\$2,323 + \$428/lot	\$2,010 + \$428/lot
Parcel Map Check (Engineering Dept.)	\$1,395.00 plus \$96.00 per parcel (Engineering) plus \$20 per parcel (GIS) plus \$54 per map (Environmental Health)	\$1,395.00 plus \$96.00 per parcel (Engineering) plus \$20 per parcel (GIS) plus \$54 per map (Environmental Health)
Subdivision Map Check (Engineering Dept.)	\$2,917.00 plus \$96.00 per parcel (Engineering) plus \$20 per parcel (GIS) plus \$54 per map (Environmental Health)	\$2,917.00 plus \$96.00 per parcel (Engineering) plus \$20 per parcel (GIS) plus \$54 per map (Environmental Health)
Tentative Map	\$2,323 + \$428/lot	\$2,323 + \$428/lot

<b>Fee Category</b>	<b>Fee Amount</b>	
Final Parcel Map	Map check for conditions included in Tentative Map fees	Map check for conditions included in Tentative Map fees
Reconsideration of Tentative Map	1/2 current fee + \$25.00	1/2 current fee + \$25.00
Extension of Time (to record final map)	\$386.00	\$386.00
Reversion to Acreage	\$789.00	\$789.00
Modification of Recorded Map by Amendment of Recorded Map	\$1,413 + \$50/map	\$1,413 + \$50/map
Modification of Recorded Map by Certificate of Correction	\$912 + \$50/map	\$912 + \$50/map
Inspection Fee – Encroachment Permit (Engineering Dept.)	\$85.79/hour + vehicle rate of \$19.94/hour	\$85.79/hour + vehicle rate of \$19.94/hour
Record of Survey Check (Engineering Dept.)	\$592.00	\$592.00
<b>Environmental Review</b>	<b>Single-Family</b>	<b>Multifamily</b>
Initial Study	Included in cost of environmental documentation noted below	Included in cost of environmental documentation noted below
Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (Prepared by Consultant)	\$7,047 + 5.41% of EIR cost paid by developer	\$7,047 + 5.41% of EIR cost paid by developer
Environmental Impact Report (Prepared by Planning Department)	\$3,616 + \$89/hr.	\$3,616 + \$89/hr.
Negative Declaration (Prepared by Consultant)	\$5,182 + 5.41% of the Negative Declaration cost paid to consultant	\$5,182 + 5.41% of the Negative Declaration cost paid to consultant
Negative Declaration (Prepared by Planning Department)	\$2,904 + \$101/hr.	\$2,904 + \$101/hr.
Mitigated Negative Declaration (Prepared by Consultant)	\$5,182.00 + 5.41% of the Negative Declaration cost paid to consultant	\$5,182.00 + 5.41% of the Negative Declaration cost paid to consultant
Mitigated Negative Declaration (Prepared by Planning Department)	\$2,904.00 + \$101/hr.	\$2,904.00 + \$101/hr.
<b>Fees for Service</b>	<b>Single-Family</b>	<b>Multifamily</b>
Water and Sewer connection, meters, and other service fees	Pursuant to individual water and sewer provider fees, contact applicable service provider for information	Pursuant to individual water and sewer provider fees, contact applicable service provider for information
Water well permit (Environmental Health)	\$514.00	N/A
Sanitary septic permit (Environmental Health)	\$457.00 (Tank only, \$294.00)	N/A

Source: Plumas County Planning and Building Services Fee Schedule, 2025.

## Development Fees

The County does not have development impact fees.

Plumas County estimates the total building permit fees for a 2,000 square foot dwelling unit, including an attached 500 square foot garage, 200 square foot covered porch, 400 square foot covered patio, and 600 square foot deck is \$6,173.90. Based on typical single-family construction development costs (\$400 per square foot) in Plumas County, the overall estimated proportion of development costs (\$800,000) to building permit fees (\$6,173.90) is roughly 0.01 percent.

Based on a 10-unit market rate multi-family apartment complex, with each unit being a one-bedroom 600 square foot space with a 40 square foot covered porch and a 200 square foot carport garage space, the County estimates the total building permit fees at \$19,068.94 for the development. With estimated market rate multi-family construction development costs in Plumas County (\$350 per square foot), the overall estimated proportion of development costs (\$2,100,000) to building permit fees (\$19,068.94) is roughly 0.01 percent.

It should be noted that to develop subsidized a multi-family affordable apartment complex in Plumas County, would generally have the same County development fees as the multi-family market rate apartment complex, but it would likely be three times the cost to develop (\$6,250,000) due to factors such as more complex financing structures that lead to a mix of public and private funding sources, which can involve multiple layers of bureaucracy and administrative costs and higher labor costs (e.g., prevailing wage).

## Building Standards and Code Enforcement

### Building Standards

Plumas County, pursuant to Plumas County Code, Title 8 Building Regulations, Chapter 1 Building Code, has adopted, the following:

- 2007 and all subsequent editions (2016) of the California Building Code
- 2006 International Building Code
- 2007 and all subsequent editions of the California Electrical Code (2016)
- State Housing Law (California Health and Safety Code §§ 17910 et seq; California Code of Regulations, Title 25, Div. 1, Ch. 1, Subchapter 1) and subsequent amendments
- 2007 and all subsequent editions of the California Mechanical Code (2016)
- 2007 and all subsequent editions of the California Plumbing Code (2016)
- 2007 and all subsequent editions of the California Fire Code (2016)

No local amendments have been made, with the exception of a local ordinance for California Code of Regulations, Title 25 pursuant to Plumas County Code Title 8 Building Regulations, Chapter 20 (Limited Density Owner-Built Rural Dwellings in the Unincorporated Areas of Plumas County – in perpetuity) and Chapter 21 (Limited Density Owner-Built Rural Dwellings in the 2021 Dixie Fire and Beckwourth Complex Fire Perimeters as Delineated by CAL FIRE – effective through December 31, 2028).

The ordinance is worded so that new State-adopted revised codes are locally adopted without the need to amend the ordinance every three years when the new codes come out.

These standards include the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) or “Chapter 7A” Materials and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure in the California Building Code, which are applicable in Very-High, High, and Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the SRA (State Responsibility Area) and the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the LRA (Local Responsibility Area).

The County also enforces the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection SRA Fire Safe Regulations, effective April 1, 2023. The Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the SRA were last updated circa 2023/2024 and effective April 1, 2024.

For more information on the SRA, see the County’s website at: <https://www.plumascounty.us/3355/SRA-Fire-Hazard-Severity-Zones-FHSZ-Map>.

Most recently on June 10, 2025, the County Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance (No. 25-1159), to go into effect July 10, 2025, which is based on the Office of the State Fire Marshall mandate by Government Code Sec. 51178 to identify levels of fire hazard in the LRA to add Chapter 9.5 to the Plumas County Code, Title 9 Planning and Zoning, that designates Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the unincorporated Plumas County LRA areas (Town of Chester, Town of Quincy, Town of East Quincy, and areas of Sierra Valley) consistent with State Law and with an associated Official Hazard Map dated January 22, 2025.

For more information on the LRA, see the County’s website at: <https://www.plumascounty.us/3354/LRA-Fire-Hazard-Severity-Zones-FHSZ-Map>.

## Code Enforcement

Most code violations do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff’s Department. Therefore, a Code Enforcement Department was established by the County Board of Supervisors to investigate and enforce violations of the Plumas County Municipal Code, California Building Regulations, some of California’s Penal Codes (including sections 373(a), 374.4, and 402b), and California Health and Safety Codes (including 17920.3 involving substandard buildings) on private property. The Plumas County Code Enforcement Department and Building Department views code enforcement as the means to ensure safe and uniform construction practices critical to providing decent, suitable shelter for all economic segments of the community, and to safeguard the general health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Concerned residents may file a complaint online using CloudPermit or in person at the Office of Planning & Building Services at 555 Main Street in Quincy. Alleged violations come to the attention of Code Enforcement through the public, community groups, other agencies and Board of Supervisors referrals. Code Enforcement is primarily a complaint-driven process with the sole purpose of maintaining established standards for the community. Potential violation concerns include the following:

- Zoning Ordinance
- Building Codes
- General Plan
- Environmental Health and Safety Regulations

The Code Enforcement Department’s Operating Principles include the following:

- Compliance is our goal; enforcement is to be used after other options have failed.
- Respond to enforcement concerns in accordance with established priorities.
- Assist the owner or tenant through the permit process, where this approach achieves compliance.
- Allow the owner/tenant a reasonable amount of time to resolve a violation.
- Creating a homeless situation is to be avoided whenever possible.

An Investigative Service Request Form or Complaint Form (found on the County's website at <https://www.plumascounty.us/79/Code-Enforcement>) is mandatory before a complaint is accepted and processed for investigation.

The Plumas County Code Enforcement Department is managed under the Building Department and in 2024 was made up of two (2) full-time 1.0 FTE staff members, including a Chief Code Enforcement Officer and Code Enforcement Officer. Officers will educate both the complainant and the property owner on relevant codes and the best path to compliance if a violation exists. If a permit is required to bring the property into compliance, Code Enforcement Officers will monitor the permit applicant from the date of submission to the final inspection.

Enforcement of the Building Code is not viewed as an obstacle to the provision of affordable housing in the County. Program H 3.2 ensures compliance with County codes through the County's code enforcement practices.

## On- and Off-Site Improvements

Site improvement costs include the cost of providing access to the site, clearing the site, and grading. In the case of a subdivision, such costs may also include other improvements such as building roads and installing sewer, water, and other utilities.

Residential subdivision projects require street widths as follows:

- Total right-of-way for a typical multifamily subdivision is 60 to 78 feet wide, with a surfaced traveled way 22 feet wide, total paved shoulder 16 feet wide, and rocked shoulders 4 feet wide. Total shoulder width may be reduced to 6 feet where no on-street parking is permitted, and ADT (Average Daily Traffic) is less than 1,000.
- Total right-of-way for a typical single-family subdivision is 50 to 60 feet wide, with surfaced traveled way 22 feet wide and total shoulder 4 feet to 8 feet wide.
- Total right-of-way for a typical suburban or rural subdivision is 40 to 50 feet wide, with surfaced traveled way 18 to 22 feet and total shoulder 4 feet wide.

As with land costs, several variables impact required funds, including site topography and proximity to established roads and utilities (e.g., sewer and water lines). Engineering and other technical assistance costs are usually included with site improvements, as these services are required to ensure that development is constructed according to established codes and standards.

Developers of multifamily projects and single-family housing tracts may be required to pay for extension of sewer and water services, depending on location. These and other site improvement costs are typical of all counties in California and do not impose a significant constraint on the development of housing. The County does not impose any unusual requirements as conditions of approval for new development.

## Review of Local Ordinances

The County does not have any locally adopted ordinances that hinder the development of housing.

## California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The state mandated regulations require projects subject to discretionary review be evaluated for environmental impacts. These additional regulations can result in significant increases in temporal and monetary costs. Applicants may be required to prepare environmental studies and environmental impact reports (EIR), delaying project approval. The County is unable to reduce constraints from this state mandate, except for those provisions in CEQA that may allow exemptions, such as streamline housing. Projects determined to be subject

to CEQA also require a review for completeness by staff within thirty-days of submittal. Staff then have six months (or one year when an EIR is required) from the time the application is determined to be complete to prepare an initial study (IS) and determine if the environmental documentation based on the proposed project would be negative declaration (ND) or mitigated negative declaration (MND). Residential development in Plumas County primarily consists of detached single-family dwelling units exempt from CEQA, as the actions to review these projects are ministerial.

## **Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation**

Plumas County's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) is managed by the County's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and is reviewed and updated every five years to ensure the plan remains current with natural hazard events and maintains eligibility for State and Federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding.

The primary natural disasters of concern in Plumas County include floods, wildfires, earthquakes, severe weather, and drought. To minimize the threat to public health and safety while concurrently minimizing the impact on future housing development, prioritization will be given to the hazards within Plumas County that are most likely to occur and often result in damage to community assets during the planning process. In 2024, the County initiated a multi-jurisdictional LHMP update, to include the City of Portola for the first time and other special district partners in the County, which is expected to be completed in summer of 2026.

For more information on the County's LHMP, visit the following website at:  
<https://www.plumascounty.us/2214/Multi-Hazard-Mitigation-Plan>.

## **Non-governmental Constraints**

### **Development Costs / Cost of Construction**

Construction costs have risen over the past 5 years with labor and materials fluctuating due to the commodities market and housing demand, coupled with the rebuilding due to the wildfires in 2021 that destroyed the communities of Greenville, Canyon Dam, and Indian Falls among other affected areas in unincorporated Plumas County including the Highway 70 canyon, Bucks Lake, Indian Valley, Warner Valley, the Lake Almanor Basin, Dixie Valley, and Frenchman Lake.

Circa 2024 the cost to build a stick-built home in Plumas County ranged from \$400 to \$550 per square foot, while the cost to install a mobile/modular home ranges from \$300 to \$350 per square foot. The addition of amenities and complexities raises the cost to over \$550 per square foot. In comparison, construction costs circa 2019 ran as low as \$125 to \$150 per square foot for stick-built homes.

Construction costs vary widely according to the type of development, with multifamily housing generally costing less per square foot than single-family homes. However, wide variation within each construction type exists depending on the size of the unit and the number and quality of amenities provided, such as fireplaces, swimming pools, and interior fixtures, among others.

In addition to construction costs, the price of land is one of the largest components of housing development costs. Land costs vary depending on whether the site is vacant or has an existing use that must be removed. Similarly, site constraints such as environmental issues (i.e., steep slopes, soil stability, seismic hazards, or flooding) can also be factor in the cost of land. Other costs stem from professional services such as land surveying and engineering, soils engineering/analysis, site design, landscape and architectural design, and permit processing.

As labor and material costs have increased substantially, the cost of construction in Plumas County has risen to a level that impacts the price of new construction and rehabilitation. Therefore, increased construction costs have constrained new housing construction and the rehabilitation of existing housing. Proactively, the County will continue to do its part in reducing development processing times and providing a more streamlined review process, and specifically, 2021 wildfire rebuilds have been given the priority with Planning and Building plan checks.

## Availability of Financing

The cost of borrowing money to finance the construction of housing or to purchase a house affects the amount of affordably priced housing in Plumas County. Fluctuating interest rates can eliminate many potential homebuyers from the housing market or render a housing project that could have been developed at lower interest rates infeasible. Typically, when interest rates decline, sales increase. The reverse has been true when interest rates increase.

**Table 28** illustrates interest rates as of May 2025. On average, interest rates have steadily increased since April 2019 (**Table 29**). Each table presents both the interest rate and the annual percentage rate (APR) for different types of home loans.

**Table 28: Interest Rates (May 2025)**

	Interest (Percent)	APR (Percent)
<b>Conforming</b>		
30-Year Fixed	7.0	7.17
15-Year Fixed	6.0	6.25
5-Year ARM	6.375	7.123
<b>Jumbo</b>		
30-Year Fixed	6.75	6.865
5-Year ARM	5.875	6.736

Source: [www.bankofamerica.com](http://www.bankofamerica.com) May 2025.

**Table 29: Interest Rates April 2019**

	Interest (Percent)	APR (Percent)
<b>Conforming</b>		
30-Year Fixed	4.125	4.23
15-Year Fixed	3.5	3.701
5-Year ARM	3.75	4.646
<b>Jumbo</b>		
30-Year Fixed	3.875	3.939
7-Year ARM	3.250	4.220

Source: <https://www.wellsfargo.com/>, April 2019.

## Availability of Insurance

The availability of fire insurance options for homeowners in Plumas County, being a rural area with a majority of very high and high wildfire risk areas, is difficult and has become more difficult post 2021 wildfires. Individual homeowners have reported being dropped by insurance companies or have experienced year-over-year 50 to 100 percent, and greater, premium increases, including policies from California FAIR Plan coverage.

The California FAIR Plan is an insurance policy tailored to provide Californians with basic fire coverage when this coverage is not available from a traditional carrier. A FAIR Plan policy will satisfy a mortgage company's requirement that your home be fire insured; however, the FAIR Plan is often considered cost-prohibitive. Homeowners in wildfire-prone regions, such as Plumas County, often must turn to the FAIR Plan as the option of "last resort" yet may not be able to afford the higher than standard coverage premiums. The FAIR Plan collects premiums and adjusts claims and is financially backed by insurance companies licensed to sell property insurance in California.

Relief from high fire insurance premiums is limited and has a profound impact on housing affordability in all of Plumas County, and especially those parcels that are coterminous or near heavily forested public lands.

California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara's regulation, Safer From Wildfires, finalized in October 2022, directs insurance companies to provide discounts for wildfire safety actions such as community mitigation and home-hardening. Commissioner Lara's wildfire safety regulation should help increase access to insurance underwriting by promoting wildfire safety across the State. For many years, insurance companies have been using alternate wildfire risk tools for determining where to write and renew policies and how much premium to charge a policyholder. As the Safer From Wildfires regulation is fully implemented, if a homeowner or business owner takes steps to implement the risk mitigation actions, owners should be able to see relief and even discounts and wildfire mitigation credits in their insurance premium.

Pursuant to Government Code Sec. 51179(a), the Plumas County Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance No. 2025-1159, effective July 10, 2025, adding Chapter 9.5 to the Plumas County Code Title 9 Planning and Zoning to designate Local Responsibility Area (LRA) Moderate, High, and Very High FHSZs consistent with State law and an associated official hazard map incorporated by reference (dated January 22, 2025), enacted by Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 2025-9023. Further, the County enforces the FHSZs in State Responsibility Area (SRA) effective April 1, 2024, and the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations, effective April 1, 2023.

Even though the LRA official hazard map was developed from "hazard" based models and insurance companies generally underwrite from "risk" based models, the Plumas County Board of Supervisors stated they are very skeptical that insurance companies will not be referring to the LRA FHSZ "hazard" map in some form or fashion. Therefore, Plumas County's Ordinance No. 2025-1159 (Sec. 9-9.5.101(b)), states the County's LRA official hazard map "...shall be for the purpose of evaluating local wildfire hazard planning decisions and not insurance wildfire risk underwriting decisions."

## Price of Land

Based on data gathered from Zillow.com, accessed in May 2025, lot or land costs in Plumas County range from \$7,500 to \$3,900,000 with an average price of \$146,323 and a median price of \$59,500. The realistic use of land varies depending on location, topography, availability of utility services, and forest density. Improved residential property costs range from \$39,900 to \$3,875,000 with an average price of \$692,980 and a median price of \$565,000.

## **Barriers to Funding for Non-Profits in Housing**

Non-profits operating in Plumas County that are involved with capital funding for emergency, transitional and supportive, and permanent housing, such as PCIRC and PRS, are generally reliant on grant funding to provide the housing and wraparound services. These non-profits may not be eligible for certain types of competitive and non-competitive grants, while the local government, such as Plumas County, is the eligible entity and can assist with receiving the funding and allowing the non-profit to be the County's subrecipient. Strengthening the County's relationship and cooperative partnerships with non-profit special needs housing service providers can help to build capacity through shared solutions for emergency, transitional and supportive, and permanent housing funding assistance.