



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT
LONG RANGE PLANNING

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Tiny House Fact Sheet

What are they?

There is currently no official definition of Tiny House in California. However, in practice, it is generally understood that a Tiny House is a permanent dwelling or bedroom less than 400 square feet in size, either built on a towable chassis (Moveable Tiny House) or attached to a foundation.

Why promote Tiny Houses?

When the International Code Commission (ICC) made changes to its residential code (IRC) in 2018 to facilitate Tiny House construction¹, its rulemaking document cited these reasons:

- Average US home size is increasing, while family size is decreasing;
- Tiny Houses use a fraction of the wood and wood products of a conventional home;
- Lifetime conditioning costs can be as low as 7% of conventionally sized homes;
- Increased housing cost makes home ownership unfeasible for many;
- Tiny Houses can add to affordable owned and rental housing stock.

That same document makes the following observation about Moveable Tiny Houses:

“For some people, homeownership is heavily impacted by the cost of land and even the construction of a fixed tiny house becomes unattainable. For those individuals, the presence of movable tiny houses in the building code may create their only path to home ownership. The flexibility of a movable tiny house allows individuals to locate their homes in areas of community living or on ancillary home sites, without the burdensome cost of a single-family lot. It also allows them to take their home with them should they need to relocate, thus eliminating many typical costs of moving.”²

¹ International Code Council, Appendix Q Tiny Houses, available at:

<https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IRC2018/appendix-q-tiny-houses>

² IRC Rulemaking document, 2018, at <https://tinyhousebuild.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Proposed-Tiny-House-Appendix-and-Reason-Statement.pdf>

Proposed Definition:

The definition of the Tiny House dictates which building code or standards apply to its construction. Humboldt County proposes a definition that includes the following characteristics:

- Classification as a permanent, year-round dwelling,
- on wheels or on a foundation,
- meets RV standard (ANSI) or building code (CBC or alternative).

A few jurisdictions around the state have adopted local ordinances that permit Tiny Homes on Wheels (also known as Moveable Tiny Houses) as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). These are Fresno, Ojai, Placer County, and Los Angeles (proposed, not yet approved).

Where are Tiny Houses allowed now?

- If a tiny house is an RV, it is only allowed only in mobilehome parks or special occupancy parks;
- If it is a manufactured home, where it may be located depends on whether it is on a permanent foundation or wheels. A tiny home on wheels is allowed only in mobilehome parks or special occupancy parks);
- If it is a “stick” built home, it may be located where single-family homes are allowed.
- If it is a manufactured home, it may also be located where single-family homes are allowed.

Where should Tiny Homes be allowed in the Future?

Where tiny houses will be allowed in the future depends on how we define Tiny Houses, and what codes and standards apply to their construction. You are invited to help the County figure out if, when and where they should be allowed by contacting Mary Milner, Planner at 707-268-3772 or by email at mmilner1@co.humboldt.ca.us.