

SYNOPSIS OF TRPA EIS COMMUNITY INPUT FOR HOUSING PROPOSAL

By Chris Wood, February 13, 2026, for IVCBA Housing Newsletter

TRPA Launches Environmental Impact Study: In a quest to promote development of needed workforce housing in the Lake Tahoe Basin on January 28 TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Association) began an Environmental Impact Study of its proposal to incentivize building of affordable housing. It is now seeking community input on what is to be studied in the scope of the Environmental Impact Study (“EIS”). This “scoping period” runs for 6 weeks, ending March 16. Send comments to: housing@trpa.gov; examine details on the web at: www.trpa.gov/major-projects . Public comment can expand what should be studied.

When the scoping period ends a summary report will be created and made available to the public for comment this Summer (2026). Thereafter, a draft EIS will be prepared and circulated for comment. A final EIS is expected in the Fall of 2026 and early 2027.

So far, TRPA has a list of 14 topics to be analyzed in the EIS. In no particular order, these include:

- “Public safety hazards including wildfire and evacuation”;
- “Land use, neighborhood compatibility, and growth management”.
- “Earth resources (soils, land capability, coverage)”;
- “Population, housing, socioeconomics and environmental justice”;
- “Hydrology and water quality”
- “Transportation”,
- “Air quality and greenhouse gases”, and
- “Cumulative effects” of all the changes

The EIS is intended to analyze the environmental impacts of potential actions in the proposal to incentivize workforce housing. The EIS the highest level of environmental analysis under the rules governing TRPA.

Incentives For Workforce housing: Because there is a regulatory restriction on the number of “development units” for building in the Lake Tahoe Basin, some of the policies in the housing proposals include moving “development units” to deed restricted residential projects from commercial and tourist development unit pools. Further, new

forms of housing would be incentivized like “junior ADUs” (units of 500 sq. ft. or less, within an existing house footprint) and “affordable by design” housing. Moreover, ADUs up to 1200 sq. ft. would also be eligible for program incentives consistent with local jurisdiction policies.

To increase housing choices TRPA’s proposal would zone for “missing middle” housing for, e.g., teachers, firefighters, police and medical staff. All new development would be approved if it contributed proportionately to the housing need in the basin. TRPA would “scale” its fees to reflect the size and impact of housing. And, like single family homes, fourplex residential structures would be exempt from environmental review standards.

Further, the limited (impermeable) land coverage allowed in the LT Basin would be directed toward multifamily and workforce housing rather than single-family homes. At the TRPA Advisory Planning Commission (“APC”) meeting February 11, TRPA proposed that the “goal is for less coverage” in the LT Basin.

TRPA would also continue to move toward neighborhood-scale storm water treatment to limit human generated runoff into the Lake. Local jurisdictions would be allowed to increase height and density if they demonstrate progress toward unlocking vacant housing stock. TRPA is proposing creation of a housing authority to facilitate funding and oversee housing programs and policies.

Negative environmental impacts will be paired with mitigation proposals, one of which could include “no growth” and no population increase, as discussed at the February 11 APC meeting. Other APC member comments emphasized analyzing the cumulative impact of all changes if they succeed and “the interconnectedness” of each change.

Other topics for consideration in the EIS that were raised at the January 28 TRPA Board of Directors meeting, where the EIS project was approved and the scoping period opened, include a look at restricting short term rentals (STRs) and/or putting them on the same terms with hotels and motels. Speakers also focused on the need for means to enforce Deed Restrictions.