



**CITY OF HEALDSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: January 27, 2026

SUBJECT: Land Use Code Amendments to address SB9 (HOME Act) and SB684/1123 (Starter Home Revitalization Act)

PREPARED BY: Ellen McDowell, Senior Planner

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an Ordinance amending Healdsburg Municipal Code Title 20 to add Section 20.20.125: SB 9 Housing Development.
2. Adopt a resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an Ordinance rescinding Healdsburg Municipal Code Title 20, Section 20.20.040: Small Lot Subdivisions, and replacing with Section 20.20.040 titled Small Lot Subdivisions and Housing Development to implement SB 684 and SB 1123.

BACKGROUND:

The City's Housing Element, adopted on May 1, 2023, and certified by the State on June 29, 2023, includes a program calling for amendments to the City's Land Use Code that expand housing development capacity and reduce constraints, including increasing density.

On September 23, 2025, the Planning Commission held a workshop and reviewed and considered draft ordinances related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), State Density Bonus law, SB 9, SB 684 and SB 1123. The Planning Commission offered feedback on the Ordinances including setback and parking requirements, objective design standards, unit sizes, and privacy requirements for SB9; and the prohibition of ADU and JADU's, parking, and objective design standards for SB 684 and SB 1123.

On October 28, 2025, the Planning Commission reviewed and considered Land Use Code amendments related to Accessory Dwelling Units and State Density Bonus law and recommended that the City Council adopt both ordinances. Staff did not include the SB 9 and SB 684/1123 ordinances at this meeting in order to review new legislation from the State requiring minor changes to the proposed ordinances.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

In recent years, the State legislature has adopted changes to State law aimed at increasing the supply and diversity of housing types throughout California. Efforts to incentivize the production of housing continue to be a priority for the State. While these laws represent a loss of local control,

they also present an opportunity to address the need for missing-middle housing in Healdsburg and throughout the state.

GENERAL PLAN AND LAND USE CODE ANALYSIS:

The proposed amendments to the Healdsburg Municipal Code (HMC) Title 20 Land Use Code are proposed to implement Housing Element Policy 4 (Expanding Housing Development Capacity) which calls for amending the City's Land Use Code to conform to current State development standards including State legislation for SB 9 and SB 684 / SB 1123, which both have the potential to expand our housing development capacity.

SENATE BILL 9 (HOME ACT):

California Senate Bill 9 (SB 9), also known as the Housing Opportunity and More Efficiency (HOME) Act, is a state law that took effect on January 1, 2022. It aims to address California's housing shortage by allowing increased residential density in areas previously zoned exclusively for single-family homes. Overall, SB 9 represents a significant shift in California's approach to residential zoning, aiming to increase housing supply and affordability through modest densification of existing neighborhoods. SB 9 effectively eliminates single-family zoning in California by allowing up to four homes on any parcel zoned for single-family residential.

The proposed SB 9 ordinance will be incorporated into Healdsburg Municipal Code, Title 20 to implement SB 9. Key provisions included in the ordinance are:

- **Ministerial Approval:** the SB 9 ordinance approves qualifying housing projects ministerially, without discretionary review or public hearings and streamlines the approval process for eligible developments. The City will approve or deny a complete application within 60 days of receiving it.
- **Two-Unit Developments:** The ordinance allows homeowners to construct up to two residential units on a lot currently zoned for single-family residential.
- **Lot Splits:** The ordinance allows for the subdivision of an existing single-family residential lot into two separate parcels, each of which can host up to two units, potentially allowing for four units on what was previously one single-family lot.
- **Lot Size:** The ordinance provides that lots shall be split roughly in half with the smaller lot at least 40% of the original lot and each new lot must be at least 1,200 square feet in size.
- **Unit Size:** Units created under SB 9 shall be a maximum of 1,750 square feet in size.
- **Setback Requirements:** the ordinance establishes maximum four-foot side and rear yard setbacks.
- **Parking:** The ordinance requires one automobile parking space per unit unless the parcel is located within ½ mile of a major transit stop (e.g. SMART rail station), in which case no parking is required.
- **Owner-Occupancy Requirement:** For lot splits, the ordinance requires the applicant to sign an affidavit stating their intent to occupy one of the housing units as their primary residence for a minimum of three years.
- **Exemptions and Protections:** The ordinance includes safeguards to prevent the displacement of existing tenants and excludes properties with environmental constraints such as flooding, steep hillsides, and very high severity fire zones.

- **Objective Design Standards:** The ordinance includes objective design and development standards applicable to SB 9 units to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods while remaining consistent with state law. The standards establish a maximum building height of 35 feet, require upper-story setbacks from side property lines and require compliance with the City's Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance. Consistent with SB 9, the ordinance authorizes the Planning and Building Director to modify or waive these standards when necessary to avoid physically precluding the construction of two units per parcel or reducing unit sizes below 800 square feet, with any modification limited to the minimum necessary to achieve compliance with state law.

A new chapter will be added to the Title 20 as shown in Attachment 1. The ordinance formalizes SB 9 Urban Lot Split and Two Unit Development requirements in the City's code, providing clarity to applicants, staff, and decision-makers while ensuring compliance with state law.

SENATE BILL 684/1123 (STARTER HOME REVITALIZATION ACT)

California Senate Bill 684 (SB 684), enacted in 2023 and effective as of July 1, 2024, is designed to streamline the approval process for small-scale residential developments. SB 684 allows any parcel zoned for multi-family housing and under 5 acres in size to be developed with 10 or fewer units, including subdivision into individual parcels for single-family units. Since Healdsburg's commercial zoning districts allow multi-family housing, these zones, in addition to the Multi-Family Residential zone, would be eligible for development under SB 684.

California Senate Bill 1123 (SB 1123), signed into law on September 19, 2024, and effective July 1, 2025, builds upon SB 684 to further streamline the development of small-scale housing projects. It aims to increase affordable homeownership opportunities by expanding ministerial approval processes to include vacant lots in single-family residential zones. SB 1123 allows for the development of up to 10 units on vacant lots zoned for single-family residential.

The proposed SB 684 / SB 1123 ordinance will be incorporated into Healdsburg Municipal Code, Title 20 to implement both senate bills. Key provisions included in the ordinance are:

- **Ministerial Approval:** The ordinance provides for ministerial approval for qualifying housing projects. The city will approve or deny an SB 684 / SB 1123 project within 60 days of receiving a complete application.
- **Eligible Projects:** The ordinance applies to developments of 10 or fewer residential units on urban lots up to 5 acres in size and zoned for multi-family residential or on vacant lots zoned for single-family residential up to 1.5 acres in size. Newly created lots must be no smaller than 600 square feet for multi-family zones and 1,200 square feet for single-family zones.
- **Unit Size:** Units shall be a maximum of 1,750 square feet.
- **Density and Development Standards:** The ordinance provides that the development must result in a minimum of 66% of the maximum allowable residential density for the parcel.
- **Side & Rear Setbacks:** The ordinance states that the required rear and side yard setbacks from the original lot shall equal four feet. No setback between units is required except as provided for in the California Building Code.
- **Objective Design Standards:** The ordinance includes objective design and development standards applicable to SB 684/1123 units to ensure compatibility with surrounding

neighborhoods while remaining consistent with state law. The standards establish a maximum building height of 35 feet, require upper-story setbacks from side property lines and require compliance with the City's Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance.

- Parking: One automobile parking space per unit is required and no parking spaces are required if located within ½ mile of a major transit stop (e.g. SMART rail station).
- Environmental Standards: The ordinance exempts projects from discretionary review and CEQA for qualifying projects. The site cannot be located on prime farmland, wetlands, very high fire hazard severity zone, within a special flood hazard area, or delineated earthquake fault zone.
- Lot and Parcel Size Regulations: The ordinance limits parcels to no smaller than 600 square feet if zoned for multi-family and no smaller than 1,200 square feet if zoned for single-family residential.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs): Specifies that ADUs and junior ADUs do not count towards the 10 unit maximum if the parcel is greater than 5,000 square feet in size.

Title 20, Section 20.20.040 (Small lot subdivisions) will be rescinded, replaced, and retitled to 'Small lot subdivisions and housing development' as shown in Attachment 2. The ordinance formalizes SB 684 and SB 1123 into a single ordinance in the City's code, providing clarity to applicants, staff, and decision-makers while ensuring compliance with state law.

FINDINGS:

Based on the information presented in this report, staff recommends that the Planning Commission find the following:

1. The Amendments are consistent with the Healdsburg 2030 General Plan including the goals, and policies, in that no conflicts with any Goals, Policies, Programs or Measures of the Healdsburg General Plan 2030 have been identified.
2. The Amendments are consistent with the objectives of the Land Use Code contained in Section 20.04.010 given that: 1) adoption of the proposed Amendments will continue to protect and promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the community by providing updated standards; and 2) the Amendments will implement the goals, policies, and programs related to increasing densities contained in the Healdsburg 2030 General Plan and Housing Element.
3. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the draft Amendments with hearing notices provided as prescribed in Land Use Code Section 20.28.080, including newspaper publications at least 20 days prior to the hearing date.
4. The Healdsburg 2030 General Plan EIR evaluated the environmental impacts of implementing the General Plan, including policies related to land use and economic development. Since the proposed Land Use Code amendments are designed to enforce existing General Plan policies, said amendments are within the scope of the analysis conducted in the General Plan EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Planning Commission may:

1. Recommend approval of the draft ordinances to the City Council as consistent with

Council direction and the City's Housing Element goals.

2. Recommend minor modifications or provide additional recommendations for Council consideration, such as clarifying language or implementation details.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The proposed amendments are “not a project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Government Code sections 65852.21(k) and 66411.7(n), because they are being adopted to implement Government Code sections 65852.21 and 66411.7 related to SB 9. Furthermore, the proposed ordinance implements Senate Bill 684 and Senate Bill 1123 and are not considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as provided in Government Code Sections 65852.28(e), 65913.4.5(b), and 66499.41(i).

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Senate Bill 9 Housing Development Ordinance
2. Senate Bill 684 / Senate Bill 1123 Small Lot Subdivisions and Housing Development Ordinance