



# PRESS ARTICLE

## California's First Ever Smart Living — Tiny Homes Overlay Established as Part of a New Vision for California City

D.J. Twohig, president/CEO of Big West Corp. is delighted the City Council of the city of California City approved an ordinance at its July 28 meeting that creates a Smart Living — Tiny Homes Overlay District (R-THO), which will allow for the development of tiny homes and smaller homes in select outlying tracts.

Tiny homes are defined in the ordinance as those having living areas between 200 and 500 square feet, while smaller homes are at least 500 square feet and no more than 1,200 square feet. The city's adoption of this landmark legislation allows tiny and smaller homes designed for permanent residences to be built to local and state building codes on foundation with design standards in previously engineered/recorded tracts of currently undeveloped residential zoned areas.

"This land use policy is another example of efforts by many who aspire to see economic and land use policies resulting in a competitive advantage to the city over most jurisdictions in California — a state where it has become nearly impossible to build quality housing at affordable prices," Twohig said.

As part of an ongoing effort to re-energize the building and development community, as well as increase quality of housing inventory for working individuals while providing much-needed affordable housing for the regional area, Twohig spearhead the land use policy — pushing for tiny and smaller homes to be allowed in nine select undeveloped recorded land tracts, most of which lack any available power.

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As noted in the analysis Twohig provided the city, the general plan covers 130,200 acres of land and the tiny homes district overlay recommended would represent a mere 1–2 percent of the total acreage of the city. Six of the nine tracts proposed were adopted by the City Council: two in the northernmost most outlying portion of the core community; three in the southeastern most outlying area of it; and one just south of Galileo Hill in the area along Twenty Mule Team Parkway, commonly referred to as the second community.

According to Joe Barragan, the city’s senior building official, “The land use policy is exactly what we need as a city to attract investment and new housing into those off-the-grid outlying tracts, which otherwise have no immediate identifiable residential use.”

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### **Focus on Housing**

Last summer, the City of California City and Mojave Unified School District adopted resolutions that eliminated the city developer impact fees and reduced school district fees in half in an effort to compete for residential housing starts. In the first 12 months, almost three dozen residential building permits have been issued — twice as many housing starts in one year than the past 10 years combined.

Also last summer, the city created a Fast-Track program, to move projects from initial concepts through entitlements, building permits, and construction at a pace that will further increase California City's competitive edge in the housing marketplace.

"The city is excited to introduce our Tiny Homes Overlay to the universe and we are improving our Fast Track permitting to attract quality new housing and other industries into the community," said City Manager Anna Linn, who was hired in May 2019 and is proud of the city's recent track record. "Considering our city has significant cannabis developments in progress, new industries moving here, and potential significant infrastructure improvements coming soon, we are collectively keen on being competitive as necessary to attract the building industry here to provide housing opportunities essential in offering industry a quality labor pool."

### **Gaining a Competitive Edge**

Twohig, who has 35 years invested in land research in East Kern County, spent a decade working pro-bono in public advocacy as chairman of MyCalCity.Org, spearheading several economic policies to improve the city's competitive edge. He provided extensive cannabis land use recommendations that were ultimately adopted, offered tax policy analysis to city officials, spearheading dual agency residential developer fee reductions, encouraged Fast-Track planning and development, and co-authored — with city staff — the Tiny Homes Overlay ordinance, the first of its kind in the state.

"Fortunately, for future residents and business attracted to the city as a result of more effective economic policies, city officials have been willing and responsive to take the steps necessary to improve the attraction for industry and future growth," Twohig said, noting that he is moving on from a decade of pro bono work. "The volume of work put into this landmark legislation has been tremendous; hopefully, the rewards will be in observing very noticeable improvements in the quality of life and smart living in the community for years to come."

### **Why Tiny Homes?**

When asked who would be interested in a tiny home, Twohig points to the demographic data published in his analysis: "Smart people!" The smaller footprint is more efficient and more attainable for many people, allowing them to reduce debt and live a simpler life — only 90

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minutes north of Los Angeles. Off-the-grid living is more sustainable, has a smaller carbon footprint, is easier to maintain, and is part of the trend of the more conscious homeowner.

In California City, attractive tiny plans on real estate will sell for well under \$100,000, while premium design smaller homes will cost more — but certainly far less than the typical price for a single-family home in Southern California. Mortgage payments will range up to about \$800 per month, providing a logical step into homeownership for millions of families who otherwise cannot afford to own a home in California. It is anticipated that these homes will be attractive to the regional workforce, military personnel from Edwards AFB, empty nesters, artisans, highly educated individuals, millennials, and tourists including off-road enthusiasts.

To learn more about Smart Living — Tiny Homes Overlay, California City's permit fee schedule, Cannabis development opportunities in Area 420® or other land use opportunities in the city, email Twohig at [dj@bigwestcorp.com](mailto:dj@bigwestcorp.com) or [dj@gotinycalifornia.com](mailto:dj@gotinycalifornia.com).

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