

ADU Talking Points:

Affordability: Right now, 75% of Seattle is off limits to new neighbors who can't rent a whole house or do not a downpayment for one. We have apartment bans in 75% of the city. ADUs are one way to induce mixed-income neighborhoods and more equity. ADUs also help homeowners afford to stay in their homes.

Equity: By allowing Seattle's single-detached neighborhoods to have some infill housing like ADUs, we're helping cut people's rents and commutes by putting a modest, affordable ADU closer to work, school, friends, a park, and/or frequent transit. This increases equitable access to schools, jobs, and amenities in neighborhoods largely and typically closed off to affordable living.

Walkable Communities: ADUs support small businesses by allowing more people to live within walking/biking/easy transit distance of local mom and pop shops.

Intergenerational Living: ADUs help create additional living spaces for children needing an affordable place to stay during or after college, a living arrangement for an aging parent, a relative who can babysit or fill in for child-needs, or a relative who might need at-home care. U.S. families aren't the typical nuclear family anymore. ADUs give more affordable options for all these lifestyles or for any person simply looking for a way to stay in Seattle.

Accessibility: ADUs are disability-friendly. ADUs are also much less expensive than renovating a whole house to fit someone's needs.

Aging in place: If a DADU is all on one level, the new rules will allow it to cover more of the rear setback (60% instead of 40%), making it much easier to create dwellings for aging in place. Many people move into the backyard cottage and rent out the front home to offset rising property taxes.

Parking Requirements: Let's prioritize housing for people, not storage for cars and stuff. The proposed legislation takes away the additional parking space requirement, and it doesn't count interior parking or storage space against the size limit. This means that if you would like to create a flat above a garage, you don't include the garage as part of your new unit size. It also means there is more room for your garden instead of a parking space.

Sustainability: Small, space-efficient ADUs are one of the many tools that can help mitigate the climate crisis. Expanding housing choices in existing neighborhoods prevents sprawl, cuts traffic and pollution and reduces asthma rates. ADUs can be remarkably energy efficient, cutting lifetime CO2 emissions by about half compared to the typical detached home.

Land Owners, Home Owners, & Renting Neighbors: Does it matter if someone is an owner or a renter living on the property? The proposed change is to allow anyone to live on a property with an attached or detached ADU. Right now, the property owner has to live there six months out of the year, a bias against renters. Plus, 20% of Seattle's single-family homes are already occupied by renters. The owner is not required to live there and these properties could now have an ADU, too.

Overscale homes & “building envelope” (bulk, scale, mass): New luxury detached homes are sometimes called “McMansions.” Right now, we incentivize removing small houses so the largest possible house can be constructed. Based on census data, the average household size is declining but the average square footage of a house isn’t. ADUs would prevent these tear-downs and even prevent foreclosures because they help homeowners pay their mortgages through extra rental income.

By applying a floor:area ratio (FAR) to the main house, it means new homes will be more “in scale” with the neighborhood. Plus, if someone adds an ADU to their home, it does not count towards FAR. Let’s prioritize housing for more families in our communities.

- **Size:** The proposal equalizes DADUs and AADUs, letting them both be 1,000 square feet. This is a size that a family or roommates can live in. Many lots are sized between 3,200 SF and 4000 SF; letting DADUs be built on smaller lots allows more DADUs.
- **Height:** Adding an additional one or two feet will mean it is easier to reuse a structure and build above a garage. This also makes it easier to create a new two-level structure.

It all adds up!

- These modest changes to the rules mean more and more people have the choice to create an AADU or DADU.
- Over time, this means more flexibility for families and more access to our neighborhoods.
- It also means neighborhoods for all of our residents that are built around transit, stores, parks, and schools.

Add your voice

Councilmember Mike O’Brien’s proposed ADU legislation will be introduced in the Sustainability and Transportation Committee on May 29. Public testimony on the bill will be heard by that committee on Tuesday, June 11. The Committee will consider amendments to the proposal and possibly vote on it at its June 18 meeting. After this the proposal would go to the full council. At this stage the only public input opportunity will be at the Committee’s June 11 public hearing. You may also [contact your councilmembers](#) at any time via email or phone.

June 11 Public Hearing on the proposed ADU legislation

Sustainability and Transportation Committee (O’Brien, Pacheco, Sawant, Harrell)

Tuesday, June 11, from 5:30 – 9:30 pm

City Council Chambers

Resources from MOAR – More Options for Accessory Residences

- On Tuesday, May 28 (5:15-8:15 pm), MOAR is hosting an [open house](#) for community members to learn and prepare for their June 11 testimony.
- [Sign up here](#) for testimony alerts and resources from MOAR.