

What is Washington's 2021 ADU bill?

Led by Rep. Mia Gregerson (D-SeaTac), Washington House Representatives sponsored a bill ([HB 1337](#)) to incentivize counties and cities through a grant program to reform rules and spur added accessory dwelling units (ADUs)—backyard cottages, granny flats, basement apartments, and mother-in-law suites.

To qualify for the grants, a jurisdiction must approve a menu-based set of provisions to:

- Allow owners to decide whether or not to install off-street parking spaces
- Allow owners to rent out both a house and its ADU
- Raise limits on the size and number of ADUs
- Cap minimums for lot size and setbacks
- Minimize permit and impact fees
- Remove mandates on aesthetics

The value of each grant is based on the annual number of ADUs constructed in the jurisdiction above the historic baseline (i.e. constructed as a result of the code changes adopted). For each qualifying ADU constructed, the locality will receive a grant of \$10,000, approximately equal to the amount of state sales tax collected on the construction of a typical ADU. The grant program will be administered by the Department of Commerce, which will review annual reports of ADU construction provided by jurisdictions and disburse the grants. Notwithstanding these grants, state tax revenues increase over time through increased property taxes on ADUs that otherwise would not have been built.

Core messages: Why ADUs matter for Washington communities

Sustainability

Accessory Dwelling Units—ADUs—come in many shapes and styles, detached, attached, above a garage, inside a converted garage, or even tucked inside an existing home. These are home options added within existing communities that are convenient to transit, jobs, schools and amenities are a tool in the fight against climate change. Adding modest housing choices in existing neighborhoods near these amenities prevents sprawl, cutting traffic and commute times, and tames infrastructure needs. Building smaller and attached homes results in significant energy and carbon emission reduction compared to single-family detached homes.

Shared opportunity

Where we live shapes our lives and our long-term success—from the length and cost of our commute, where we shop for groceries, and our children's schools. Modest-sized housing options, conveniently located, can provide more equitable access to jobs, schools, transit, and parks. This would help neighborhoods across the city welcome more granny flats, mother-in-law

apartments, and backyard cottages---rather than inviting more oversized, single-household McMansions.

More home choices and flexibility for all stages of life

Backyard or basement apartments expand housing options in our communities, giving homeowners more flexibility to age in place, care for family members, earn income from a small rental, or support a young adult just starting out.

Economic security for families

Allowing more homes of all shapes and sizes in established job centers can help cut costs and commute times and boost economic security and stability for Washingtonians of every age, income level, and family size.

Rewards Washington cities for taking action on local ADU reform

Cities and counties will have the flexibility to opt-in to the program, which will reward localities that lead the way by adopting strong ADU codes. Allowing ADUs that otherwise would not have been built also increases state revenue from new property, sales, and real estate excise taxes.

Spurs construction jobs during COVID-19 economic recovery

As the state recovers from the COVID-19 economic shutdown, this legislation will help provide jobs by removing barriers to ADU construction.