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Recently enacted zoning legislation that removes significant barriers to ADU development in order to address the city's housing crisis. The new code removes off-street parking and owner occupancy requirements while also streamlining the approval process for ADU development. Seattle also created a user-friendly website to simplify the process for its residents, connecting homeowners considering ADUs to members of the design and construction community, even addressing the high cost of ADU development through access to low-interest financing

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Mayor Durkan Signs Legislation to Create Path for More In-Law Apartments and Backyard Cottages by Reducing Regulatory Barriers, Also Signs Executive Order to Do More to Address Financial and Permitting Barriers

by [Kamaria Hightower](#) on July 9, 2019

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New Complementary Actions Work Together to Reduce Barriers for Development of More Accessory Dwelling Units in Single-Family Zoned Neighborhoods throughout Seattle

Seattle (July 9, 2019) – Standing next to a backyard cottage in the Whittier Heights community, Mayor Jenny A. Durkan today signed legislation and an [Executive Order](#) to advance the development of more accessory dwelling units (ADUs) like backyard cottages and in-law apartments in single-family zoned neighborhoods throughout Seattle.

Mayor Durkan signed legislation to loosen regulatory restrictions on backyard cottages and in-law apartments. Mayor Durkan also signed her new Executive Order to streamline the ADU permitting process and lower financial barriers. The legislation and [Executive Order](#) complement each other by each addressing different barriers facing homeowners today when developing an ADU. Mayor Durkan’s Executive Order delivers solutions to financial and permitting challenges that keep ADU development out of reach for many Seattle residents.

“Seattle has a housing crisis, and we have a responsibility to grow the supply of housing options as quickly as possible. We need to use every tool in our toolbox to boost the supply of housing. That’s why we are knocking down barriers for homeowners to build more backyard cottages and in-law units. With this legislation and my new Executive Order, we can address the serious regulatory, financial, and permitting challenges for backyard cottages and in-law apartments

in Seattle,” said Mayor Durkan. “Now, we will work to implement these needed changes, and continue to take action in the coming weeks to addressing housing in Seattle. We also will monitor the impact accessory dwelling units as we work to increase the affordable options available across the City, and we will work to mitigate any impacts on green space.”

Mayor Durkan’s Executive Order’s new steps include:

- 1. Assisting homeowners navigating the complex design and permitting processes.** The Executive Order directs the Department of Construction and Inspections to make pre-approved plans available at low cost. Additionally the department will hire an “ADU Navigator” to guide homeowners through the permitting process. The Office of Planning and Community Development will develop a website with a comprehensive inventory of resources to help connect prospective ADU owners with the design and construction community.
- 2. Piloting strategies that support equitable ADU development and affordability among homeowners and tenants.** Offer low-interest financing to help homeowners develop ADUs or habitable space through the Office of Housing’s Home Repair Loan Program. The City will also explore additional financing tools, including loan terms suitable to incentivize the affordable creation of ADUs.
- 3. Convening a workgroup to advise on ADU programs and services provided by the City,** including stewarding ongoing assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of our ADU regulatory changes, services, and programs within three years.

“I am thrilled that after years of work and legal delays, Seattle residents will have an easier time building backyard cottages and in-law units, creating more housing options in Seattle neighborhoods,” said Councilmember Mike O’Brien ([District 6, Northwest Seattle](#)). “I support the efforts of the Mayor and various departments to further reduce barriers to building accessory dwelling units such as streamlining the permitting process, reducing design costs, and increasing financing options for low-income homeowners. Over the past few years I have spoken with so many Seattle families who are looking for ways to build housing options that fit their families, whether it is an in-law unit for an aging parent, a backyard unit for a college-aged child, or a space to rent to a neighbor.”

The [ADU legislation](#) modifies rules by:

- Increasing from one to two the number of ADUs allowed per lot;

- Removing off-street parking and owner-occupancy requirements;
- Introducing a floor area ratio (FAR) limit for single-family lots; and
- Relaxing certain size and location standards to allow ADUs that serve families with children, people with limited mobility, and other households types.

The new regulatory rules will go in effect August 8, 2019.

In addition to the new Executive Order and signing the ADU legislation, Mayor Durkan continues to make significant investments to increase housing options for all of Seattle.

- Since December 2017, and along with our city, state, and federal partners, Mayor Durkan has announced more than \$710 million to fund development of affordable homes. City investments will help build nearly 5,200 new affordable homes by 2022.
- In January 2019, Mayor Durkan [launched the city's first-ever Affordable Middle-Income Housing Advisory Council](#) to address the housing needs of middle-income earners.
- Following her State of the City address in February, Mayor Durkan announced her [Executive Order addressing affordability and residential displacement](#).
- In March, Mayor Durkan signed into law the citywide expansion of [Mandatory Housing Affordability \(MHA\)](#).
- In April, Mayor Durkan [launched "Renting in Seattle," a centralized resource for renters and landlords offering services and help](#) navigating Seattle's rental regulations.
- Also in April, [Mayor Durkan's Innovation Advisory Council announced the development of a new affordable housing search tool](#).
- In May, Mayor Durkan [transmitted her legislation to address the displacement of long-time residents](#).
- In June, the Mayor [signed legislation advancing her vision for a new livable and affordable community at Fort Lawton](#).

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