

# Accessory Dwelling Units

AURA's Alternative Proposal



Last year City Council passed Resolution No. 20140612-062, which initiated a code amendment to **reduce the regulatory barriers to the construction of new accessory dwellings** (aka “granny flats,” “backyard cottages,” etc). The code amendment has been working its way through the city’s legislative process for almost a year now, and as part of that process, city staff has presented their proposal for an amended ordinance. AURA believes the staff proposal is a good first step, but can be improved to put more opportunities for affordable housing within reach of the average Austinite.

AURA further believes that liberalization of the ADU regulations is **only a first step**. Concurrent with an ADU ordinance, City Council should initiate other programs to facilitate the widespread deployment of backyard cottages. Some of our ideas for such programs include a) aid to low-income homeowners (who are land rich but cash poor) to construct an ADUs, b) Making sure that the SMART housing program that can be used to give incentives to build affordable ADUs is working and strengthening it where needed, and c) the development of a “design book” of off-the-shelf ADUs designed by local architects which homeowners can quickly permit and construct.

Amendment	COA Staff	AURA
<b>Minimum Lot Size</b>	Staff offers no amendment. Current requirement is 7000 sq. ft. for most lots.	As long as a lot meets setback and impervious cover requirements, it should be eligible for an ADU. <b>Remove the minimum lot size requirement.</b>
<b>Off-street Parking</b>	Staff recommends requiring 0 parking spaces for ADUs less than 550 sq. ft., and 1 space for larger ADUs.  Staff also recommends grandfathering parking for the primary residence. Owners wouldn’t have to add parking to the primary residence to be code compliant.	In addition to staff proposal, remove parking requirements for all ADUs on parcels <b>within ½ mile of Transit Oriented Districts, Core Transit Corridors and Future Transit Corridors</b> . AURA strongly supports ensuring that grandfathering parking for the primary residence is actually codified, and not up to staff interpretation.
<b>ADU Size</b>	Staff offers no amendment on ADU size.	<b>Permit a flexible maximum size depending on the size of the lot</b> , and remove the current cap of 550 sq. ft on the 2nd story. For example, a size limit of 0.15 FAR (floor-to-area ratio) would permit a granny flat up to 862 sq. ft. on a “standard” 5,750 sq. ft. Austin lot. It would permit smaller ADUs on smaller (aka “substandard”) lots, and larger, more family-friendly ADUs would be permitted on larger lots.
<b>Setbacks</b>	Staff recommends reducing the required building separation (aka “setback) from 15 ft to 10 ft.	While 10ft is an improvement, the Land Development Code should defer to the relevant fire codes for a given construction type. If an owner wishes to appropriately fire-rate the walls, there should be no reason to require additional separation.
<b>Water Meter Requirements</b>	Staff offers no amendment on water meters.	New water meter rules often add \$10,000 to \$25,000 to the cost of constructing a new granny flat. AURA supports Council’s adopted policy of permitting owners to install an inexpensive submeter instead of adding a new dedicated water meter.