



# Encouraging Backyard Cottages

January 19, 2016  
Filipino Community Center

# What is an accessory dwelling unit?

- » Attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs, mother-in-law apartments, or granny flats)
- » Detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs, backyard cottages)

Freestanding



Above garage



**1994**  
ADUs allowed citywide

**2006**  
DADUs piloted in  
southeast Seattle

**2010**  
DADUs allowed citywide

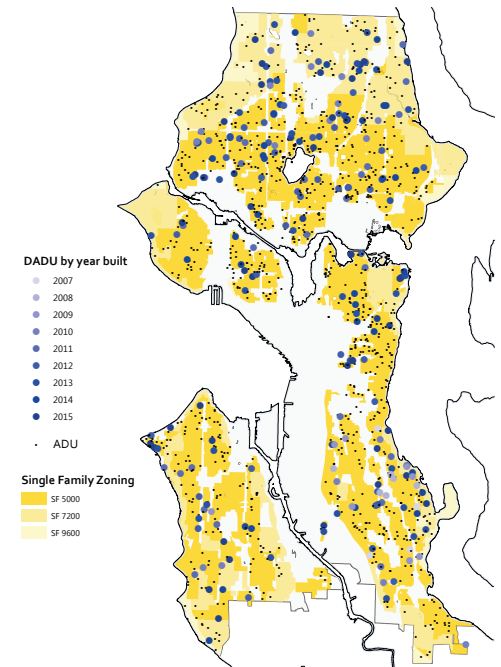
**2014**  
Council Resolution 31547  
calls for code changes

**2015**  
221 DADUs built or  
permitted citywide



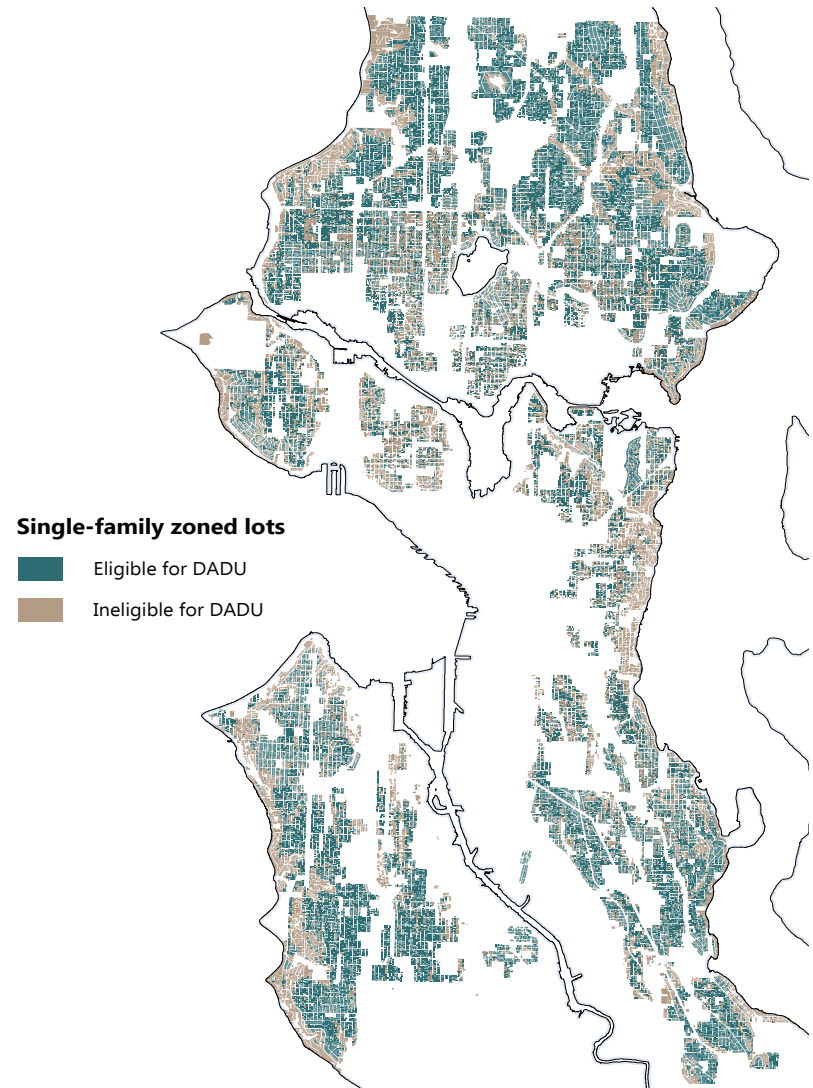
# Why are we encouraging more backyard cottages?

- » Allowed citywide since 2010, but only about 220 constructed
- » Backyard cottages provide many benefits:
  - More housing options, often in areas unaffordable to many people
  - Stable extra income that helps homeowners remain in neighborhood
  - Flexibility to adapt to changing household needs
  - “Infill” development means efficient use of land and resources
- » Opportunity for housing suitable to many household types, including families



# The scale of the opportunity

- » Cottages allowed on single-family lots:
  - at least 4,000 square feet in area
  - outside Shoreline District and some Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs)
  - subject to various development standards, such as lot coverage and height limits
- » Of **125,000 single-family lots, almost 75,000 are eligible for a cottage**
- » Cottages on only 5% of eligible lots would mean almost 4,000 new housing units



# Removing barriers to backyard cottages

- » Despite many benefits and numerous eligible lots, only about 200 built
- » Surveys and observation suggest several barriers:
  - Many lots are under 4,000 square feet but could accommodate a cottage
  - Parking requirement can increase project cost, add impervious surface, requiring removing vegetation
  - Development standards prevent some owners from building a cottage or inhibit functional design
  - The owner-occupancy requirement deters some interested homeowners and limits flexibility

*"We live on Beacon Hill and own a rental near Columbia City which fits all of the criteria for an ADU (setbacks, offstreet parking, lot size, etc) but we could not develop in this space because of the occupancy ruling ... There is at least one family out there that thinks they could do a good job with this and be respectful to neighbors."*

*"I have one uncovered parking space off an alley that is not used. This is the area where it makes the most sense to site a DADU in order to minimize the impact to our neighbors' privacy as well as preserve sunlight that reaches the backyard and the main house. But I would need to build a 2 car garage underneath the new unit or get rid of the remaining backyard to put in two new parking spaces. My neighborhood is not even close to having a shortage of street parking and most houses do not have parking."*

# Potential code changes

## » Weigh in on the changes we are exploring:

- Should we remove the off-street parking requirement?
- Should we allow an ADU and DADU on the same lot?
- Should we remove the owner-occupancy requirement?
- Should we modify development standards?
  - Maximum height
  - Rear yard coverage
  - Minimum lot size
  - Maximum square footage







## We're also looking at:

- Making it easier to obtain financing
- Allowing a broader range of households to build accessory dwelling units
- Modifying permitting fees
- Providing resources for interested homeowners

PHOTO CREDIT: STEFAN HAMPDEN

# Project timeline

