

# Pre-approved Plans for Accessory Dwelling Units



**Accessory dwelling units** (ADUs) are small, secondary homes located on the same lot as an existing residence. Since 2010, Seattle has allowed detached ADUs (DADUs) in single-family zones — but most eligible lots do not have one. To remove regulatory barriers, in July 2019 the City passed new ADU regulations. Now, we are addressing other challenges so more people can own and rent these homes.

To simplify and streamline permitting, the City is developing pre-approved DADU construction plans that offer a faster, easier, and more predictable design and permitting process. Here's how it works:

1. Our public survey informs design principles and criteria we will use to select plans.
2. We invite designers and builders to submit DADU designs.
3. Permitting staff pre-approve 6-10 plans chosen based on selection criteria.
4. Plans become available for homeowners, who can connect with the designer to create a site plan.

Homeowners choosing a pre-approved DADU plan get a shorter permit review process and reduced permit fee. Plans selected for pre-approval will be featured in an online gallery on the City's ADU website.

## Get involved

**Take our survey!** Share your thoughts about the design criteria we should use to select DADU plans to pre-approve. The survey is available through October 21 at [surveymonkeys.com/r/PreApprovedDADUs](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/PreApprovedDADUs).

**Submit a design!** Are you a designer, architect, or builder? Later this fall, we will publish selection criteria and announce a call for submissions. Selected plans will be reviewed, pre-approved, and displayed in a public online gallery. To use a pre-approved plan, a homeowner pays a royalty to the designer, who retains ownership of the plan. More information on this process coming soon.

## Why encourage ADUs?

ADUs offer Seattle residents several opportunities:

- » More places to rent in neighborhoods where housing is often unaffordable
- » For owners, a path to generate income and wealth
- » Homes meeting the needs of families with children, aging in place, multigenerational households, and people with disabilities

Mayor Jenny Durkan's July 2019 **Executive Order** calls for other actions to encourage accessible and affordable ADUs. In addition to pre-approved DADU plans, we are developing an affordable ADU financing option, creating new online tools and resources, and monitoring ADU development annually.



## How it works

Based on input collected through the survey, we will announce a call for design submissions that meet a set of selection criteria. City staff and members of the City's Design Commission, Planning Commission, Design Review Boards, and Construction Codes Advisory Board will review and recommend plans for pre-approval according to selection criteria.

We will display pre-approved DADU designs in an online gallery on the City's ADU website. Homeowners using a pre-approved plan benefit from faster permitting, as illustrated below. To use a pre-approved plan, the City connects with you with its designer, who can prepare the site plan necessary to get a construction permit.

Development in Seattle is subject to several codes and types of review. DADUs must comply with development standards in the Land Use Code, energy efficiency standards in the Energy Code, safety and seismic standards in the Residential and Building Codes, and standards for drainage, stormwater, utility connections, and plumbing.

A pre-approved DADU has undergone City review for compliance with the Residential, Building, and Energy Codes. When you choose a pre-approved plan, permitting staff review site-specific factors for your property, including compliance with zoning standards, foundation and utility design, and drainage.

**Typical DADU permit**

**4-8 months**

**Pre-approved DADU plan**      **2-6 weeks**

Total time from permit intake to issuance depends on the number of and applicant response to review cycles. In certain situations, such as lots with protected trees or Environmentally Critical Areas, the pre-approved DADU plan timeline could vary.

### I'm a homeowner. Why should I choose a pre-approved DADU plan?

Pre-approved plans benefit from a faster permitting process and reduced permitting fee. After choosing a pre-approved plan and creating a site plan, you'll receive a facilitated intake. Depending on characteristics of your property, you may be able to receive a permit within two weeks.

Because pre-approved DADU been reviewed for compliance with structural codes, limitations on modification apply, though the designer may offer choices for color, material, and interior finishes.

### I'm an architect, designer, or builder. Why should I submit a design?

DADU plans selected for pre-approved receive, at no cost, SDCI structural review similar to the existing **Standard Plan** process. Your design will be presented in the City's online gallery, giving visibility to your and/or your firm's work. You retain ownership of your design.

Homeowners choosing your design pay a small royalty to use the pre-approved plan. Then we connect them to you, should they wish to hire you to prepare the complete plan set with site plan.

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## Questions? Want to submit a design? Interested in learning more?

Email us at [DADUplans@seattle.gov](mailto:DADUplans@seattle.gov) and let us know if you'd like to receive updates as we proceed.

More information available at [seattle.gov/sdci/permits/common-projects/accessory-dwelling-units](http://seattle.gov/sdci/permits/common-projects/accessory-dwelling-units).

