



# Removing Barriers to Backyard Cottages & Accessory Dwelling Units

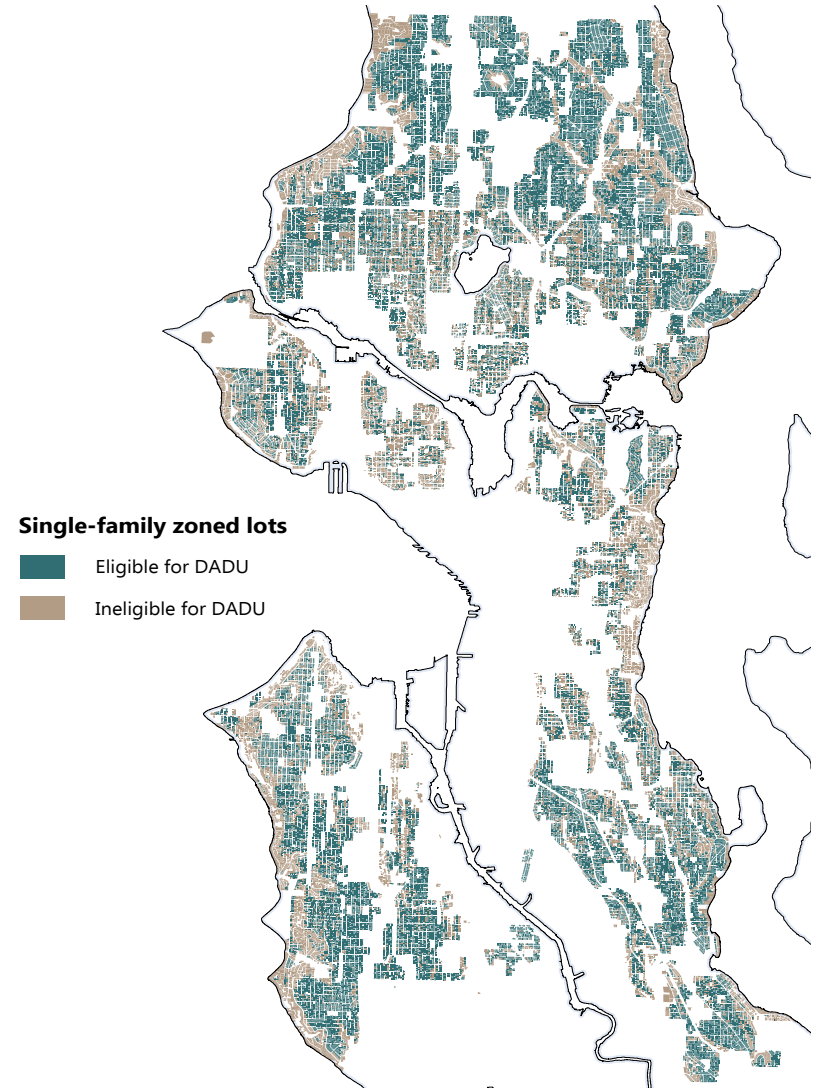
September 14, 2016  
Urban Forestry Commission

# Why do we want to encourage more backyard cottages and ADUs?

## » Many benefits:

- More housing options, often in areas unaffordable to many people
- Stable extra income for homeowners
- Flexibility to adapt to changing household needs
- Infill development is an efficient use of land and resources
- Opportunity for housing suitable to diverse household types, including families with children

» 75,000 single-family lots are eligible for a cottage, yet only about 220 built



# Removing barriers to backyard cottages and ADUs

- » Outreach to homeowners, designers, and other stakeholders
- » Identified several barriers:
  - Many lots are under 4,000 square feet but could otherwise accommodate a backyard cottage
  - Parking requirement can increase project cost, add impervious surface, and require removing vegetation
  - Development standards prevent some owners from building a cottage or inhibit functional design
  - The current 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, off street 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."*

# Project timeline

## September 2014

Council Resolution 31547  
calls for removing barriers to  
ADUs/DADUs

## Sept. – Dec. 2015

Targeted outreach to DADU  
owners and designers

## January 19, 2016

Community Meeting #1  
Filipino Community Center

## May 19, 2016

Draft legislation and  
SEPA review

## April 2015

City Council  
Lunch & Learn

## December 2015

City Council  
Lunch & Learn

## February 3, 2016

Community Meeting #2  
Wallingford Senior Center

## June–September 2016

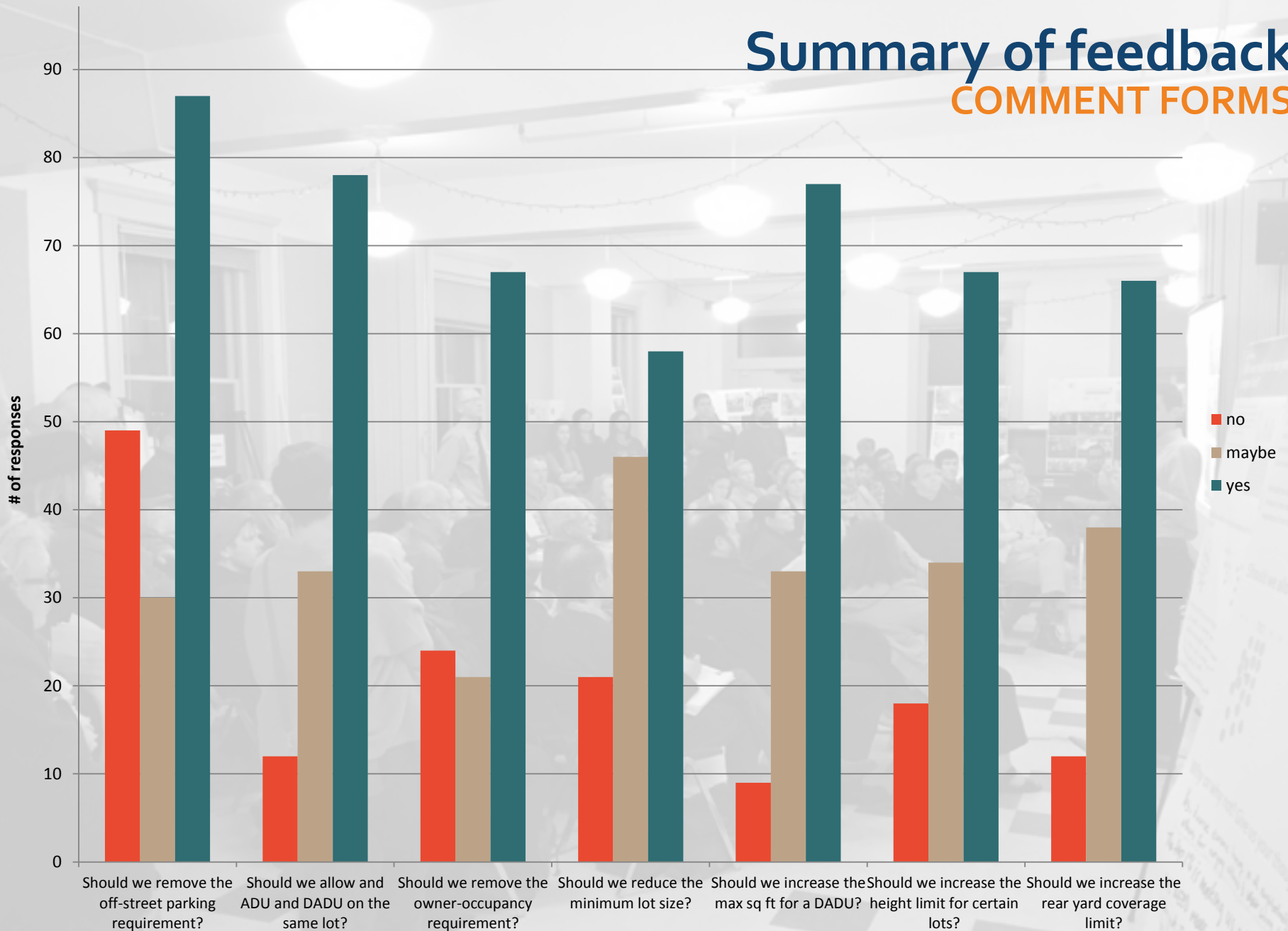
SEPA appeal





# Summary of feedback

## COMMENT FORMS



# Should we remove/modify the owner-occupancy requirement? Feedback from public meetings:

This requirement is too restrictive. If I would like to move to a different location in Seattle for 5-7 years, or to a different state or country for work, but plan to move back, my main way of dealing with this issue would be to leave the ADU empty which does nothing for affordability or housing stock.

Portland doesn't have a restriction on owner occupancy and hasn't had an explosion of ADUs due to developers rushing in. Should it matter then if a developer as opposed to a private owner build an ADU? I don't think so.

We are reluctant to add a DADU if we are unable to also rent out the main house. If we needed to relocate for more than six months, we would be forced to sell our house or forgo renting the DADU, which would not be feasible given the significant cost of building the unit. This requirement makes adding a DADU too financially risky.

I'd like a time limit so that a person has to live on the property for 4 years before they're allowed to rent out both units. People make different decisions when they have to live with them than when they don't live in a place.

"I STRONGLY disagree with removing the owner occupancy requirement. Owner occupants have a much more vested interest in their properties and the current requirement will keep developers away.

I live in Seattle and own a 1,000 sq. ft. rental on a 9,000 sq. ft lot. There's a cottage in the back, but it can't be a DADU. It's a waste of space!

Absolutely not. Increasing the number of individuals with zero vested interest and removing the requirement for close owner involvement is NOT good for existing homeowners in those neighborhoods.

# Should we remove the off-street parking requirement? Feedback from public meetings:

This should depend on the street's capacity, current density, and the allowable occupancy in the accessory units. Discussing this in isolation may mean in the future two car households may not be able to park their second car in front of their own home or may have to pay city parking permit or meter fees like Capitol Hill.

We have considered building a DADU in the Phinney/Greenwood neighborhood, but cannot due to the requirement that we add a second parking space, which is not feasible given the configuration and size of our lot. Moreover, there are several nearby bus lines and a variety of amenities that make living without a car an increasingly viable option for many people in this neighborhood. The dire need for more housing in Seattle should take precedence over concerns about adequate parking.

I don't support easing parking requirements for backyard cottages. It negatively impacts a neighbor's quality of life if their guests can't park near their house. I often visit family who live at 65th & Latona and 45th & Stone Way and have to park a block away from each location.

The neighborhood I live in is not even close to having a shortage of street parking and most houses do not have parking. We also have good access to transit. The requirement that we add off-street parking in this neighborhood is at best silly and at worst harmful to the character of the neighborhood when green spaces and plants are removed to put in unnecessary parking.

# Summary of draft proposal

- » Remove the off-street parking requirement for ADUs and DADUs
- » Allow an ADU and DADU on the same lot
- » Modify the owner-occupancy requirement for ADUs and DADUs
- » Modify some development standards for DADUs
  - Increase maximum height limit 1-2 feet
  - Allow 60% rear yard coverage for one-story DADUs (40% limit currently)
  - Reduce minimum lot size to 3,200 square feet
  - Increase maximum square footage to 1,000 square feet (same as ADUs)
- » No change to maximum lot coverage limit
- » No change to yard and setback requirements
- » No change to maximum number of people that can live on a single-family lot



# Thank you.

## For more information:

[seattle.gov/council/obrien/  
backyardcottages/](https://seattle.gov/council/obrien/backyardcottages/)

[seattle.gov/DPD/cityplanning/  
completeprojectslist/  
backyardcottages](https://seattle.gov/DPD/cityplanning/completeprojectslist/backyardcottages)

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