

*pre-approved  
plans for*

# ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

## SUBMISSION GUIDE

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. In July 2019 the City passed legislation removing common code barriers that hamper ADU production. 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 We invite designers and builders to submit DADU designs that fulfill the criteria and follow the requirements outlined in this guide.
- 2 A selection committee reviews submissions and identifies 6-10 plans that permitting staff pre-approve for compliance with certain structural codes. Designers retain ownership of their plans.
- 3 Pre-approved plans are displayed in an online gallery with images, description, and information about the designer.
- 4 Homeowners can browse the gallery, choose a design, connect with its designer to proceed with the necessary steps to permit the DADU on their site.

### In this guide:

- » *The benefits of pre-approved designs*
- » *The selection process*
- » *Selection criteria and submission requirements*
- » *How to choose a pre-approved DADU design for your property*

## Why offer pre-approved designs?

ADUs are one part of how the City is working to increase housing choices so current and future residents alike can remain and flourish in Seattle. Thanks to recent **regulatory changes**, more people will be able to create these lower-cost, space-efficient homes in our neighborhoods. ADUs give families more options to meet their needs, help homeowners build wealth, and add rental housing in areas where many people, especially low-income households and people of color, have long been and continue to be unable to access housing.

### New ADU rules

In July 2019, the City of Seattle adopted the most progressive ADU regulations of any city in North America. Under the new rules, a property can have two ADUs; height and size limits for DADUs facilitate family-size units; and off-street parking or occupancy requirements do not apply.

DADUs can be located in the rear yard and must remain outside the front and side yards. Key standards governing DADU scale and location include a size limit of 1,000 square feet, an overall lot coverage limit, and a rear yard coverage limit of 60 percent.

ADU rules are available in **Section 23.44.041** of the Land Use Code.

But removing code barriers — though critical for boosting ADU production — won't alone ensure that the opportunities ADUs provide are available to everyone, particularly folks with less money and experience in the development process. For that reason, when she signed the ADU legislation, Mayor Jenny Durkan also issued an **Executive Order** calling for additional strategies, including pre-approved plans, to promote and expand access to ADUs throughout Seattle.

High construction costs and complex design and permitting processes often deter or prevent homeowners from creating a DADU. By developing pre-approved plans, the City can offer a faster, more predictable, and cheaper path for people to build a DADU. And by encouraging relatively lower-cost designs, the City can help expand the number of households who can afford it. Together with other strategies, like new financing options, pre-approved plans nurture ADU development in Seattle and help address housing scarcity so our neighborhoods can be more inclusive.

Homeowners choosing a pre-approved DADU plan will benefit from a simple and streamlined permitting process and reduced permit fees. Development in Seattle is subject to several codes and types of review. DADUs are typically reviewed for compliance with development standards in the Land Use Code, energy efficiency standards in the Energy Code, safety and seismic standards in the Residential (Building) Code, and standards for drainage, stormwater, utility connections, and plumbing.

The pre-approval process involves City review of the DADU structure for compliance with the Land Use, Residential, and Energy Codes. When using a pre-approved plan, applicants receive an expedited appointment to apply for the permit and submit plans. Permitting staff at the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) then check that the standard plan matches the one on file with the Department and review for site-specific factors, including compliance with zoning standards, foundation and utility design, and drainage.

## Selection process

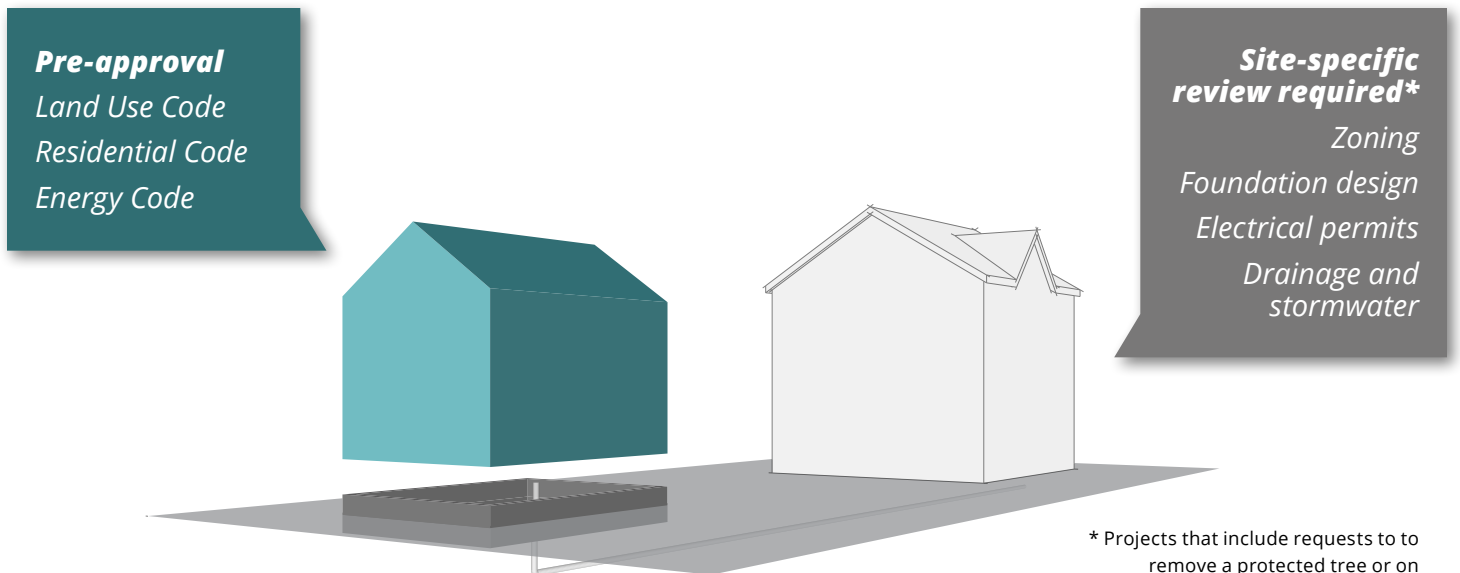
Submissions are due February 17, 2020, and must meet the submission requirements described in this document. A selection committee composed of volunteer members of design and construction professionals from the City's Design Review Boards, the Seattle Design Commission, the Seattle Planning Commission, and the Construction Codes Advisory Board and City staff will review all submissions meeting submittal requirements against the selection criteria described in this document and identify 6-10 designs for SDCI staff to pre-approve.

Designers of selected plans must then submit a full permit-ready plan set to SDCI, as described in **Tip 106** and **Tip 303**, which will be reviewed and pre-approved similarly to the process for Standard Plans describe in **Tip 310**. There is no cost to the designer for this plan review.

Pre-approved designs will be showcased in an online gallery on the City's website, with images of the DADU, a description of the design, and information about its designer. Members of the public can browse the gallery, choose a design, and connect with its designer to create the site plan necessary for a complete permit application. Other design submissions not chosen for pre-approval may also be displayed online.

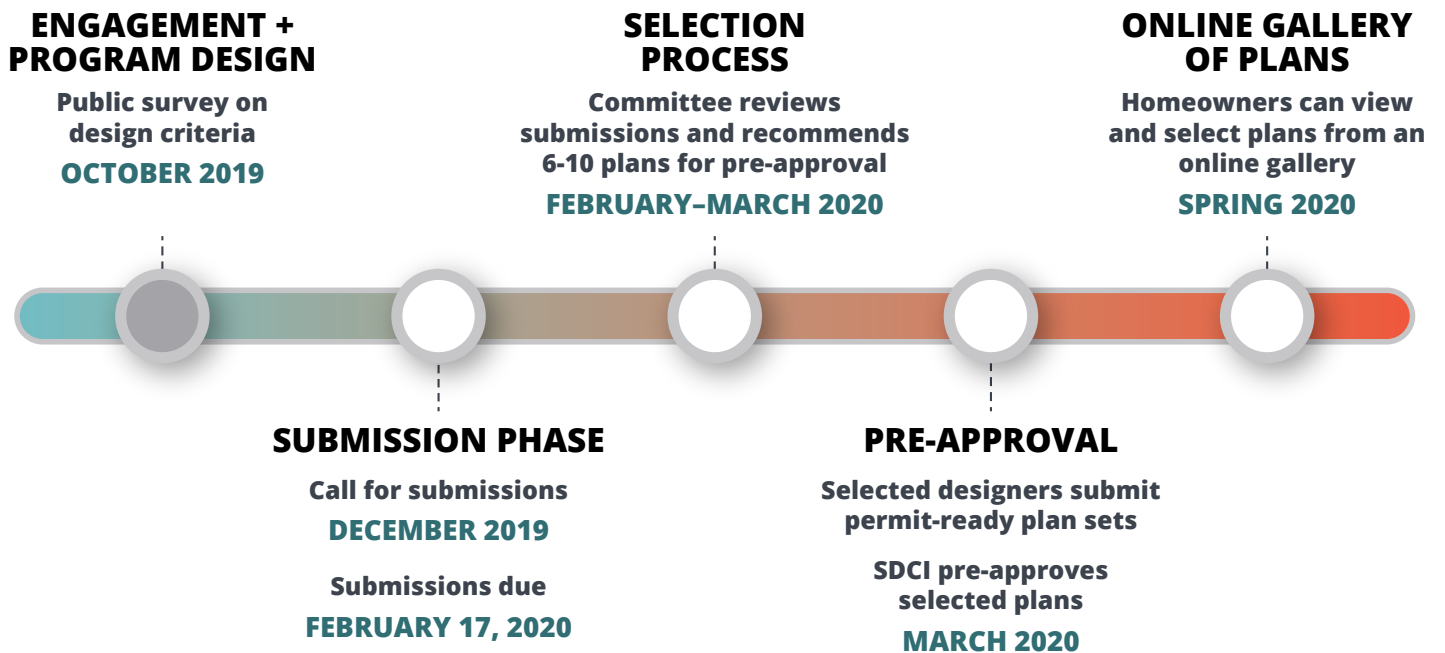
### Design criteria survey

In September and October 2019, we conducted a public survey about the design criteria we should use to select DADU plans to pre-approve. We received 568 responses and summarized key themes in **this report**.



\* Projects that include requests to remove a protected tree or on sites with Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) may still use standard plans, but additional plan review and time will likely be required

The selection committee will review submissions in two phases. In the first phase, the committee will do a blind review of submissions in each category of design, scoring each against the design criteria. In the second phase, the committee will review shortlisted designs across all categories to ensure they collectively achieve architectural variety and are likely to be feasible for a wide range of sites, conditions, and households.



### Compensation for designers

Pre-approved plans are intended to offer a simplified and lower-cost opportunity to create a DADU. To use a pre-approved plan, a homeowner pays a royalty, set by the designer up to \$1,000, for the use of their plan. Homeowners can then hire the designer, who retains the copyright to and liability for the pre-approved plan, to prepare the site plan, obtain a building permit, and/or to construct the DADU at an hourly rate specified in their plan submission. If a homeowner instead wishes to use other professionals or complete work themselves, the designer can require a liability release that the homeowner must sign to use the plan.

## DADU categories

ADUs can help a wide range of households meet their needs. We seek a catalog of pre-approved plans that serve diverse family and household types, including individuals, families with children, multigenerational households, and older adults downsizing, aging in place, or housing a caregiver, among others. Therefore, the following categories describe the range of ADUs that we seek to pre-approve. Submissions should identify which category or categories they fulfill.



**Small-footprint DADUs.** We seek designs that, whether one or two stories, have a footprint of 250-300 square feet, a size likely to meet coverage limits on lots as small as 3,200 square feet, the minimum lot area required for a DADU. On small or narrow lots, treed lots, and lots with limited available yard space or lot coverage, an ADU with a small footprint may be desirable, or possibly the only feasible option. Smaller units also tend to cost less to construct.



**Family-friendly DADUs.** We seek designs with at least two bedrooms. Larger households and families with children may need multiple bedrooms to meet their needs. Large lots with ample yard space may be able to accommodate larger ADUs, which can work for many families or offer more potential rent.



**Accessible DADUs.** We seek designs that meet accessibility requirements. Some people require a single-story accessible design. We recognize that accessibility depends in part on site conditions, which vary for each lot. But single-story ADUs designed with accessibility in mind meet the needs for some residents. We also encourage plans that, even if not fully accessible, include universal design features and are visitable.<sup>1</sup>



**Low-cost DADUs.** While we encourage cost-saving measures in all submissions, we seek designs that specifically offer a substantially lower price point than conventional DADU designs.<sup>2</sup>



**Garage DADUs.** In July 2019, the City passed new ADU regulations that no longer require an off-street parking space when constructing an ADU. Nevertheless, we know some homeowners may desire a DADU that includes a garage or may require such a design in order to preserve the required parking space for the principal unit. Therefore, we seek designs that includes a garage space.

- <sup>1</sup> While full accessibility supports long-term use by people with mobility limitations, visitability provides the most essential features to enable a person with mobility limitations to visit or live in a home at least temporarily. Three core visitability features include a zero-step entrance, minimum widths for ground-floor doorways and hallways, and a ground-floor bathroom. Visibility can also include reinforcement in walls next to toilets for future installation of grab bars, and light switches and electrical outlets within comfortable reach for all.
- <sup>2</sup> We also hope to encourage prefabricated designs, which can offer lower prices. Though designs that do not require SDCI structural review will not be selected as a pre-approved plan, submissions of factory-built units certified by Washington L&I are welcome. See the section on L&I-certified DADUs.

## Selection criteria

During the first phase of review, the selection committee will review submissions in each category according to the following design criteria. We recognize that some of these criteria may compete with one another. Some green building strategies, for example, may conflict with minimizing cost. We do not expect every submission to maximize each criterion. Instead, we encourage designs that thoughtfully balance the criteria with an overall goal of increasing access to and production of ADUs.

We also aim to support and draw on the diverse experience and expertise of Seattle's design and homebuilding professionals, especially early-career architects, emerging professionals, and women- and minority-owned businesses (WMBE). We will use affirmative outreach about the call for submissions to encourage broad participation. We encourage submissions from firms who can conduct business in languages other than English.

## Phase one review

In the first review phase, submissions will be scored on a scale of high, medium, or low according to the following criteria:

**Low cost.** We want pre-approved plans to make creating an ADU possible for more Seattle residents, particularly households otherwise unable to afford it. We will prioritize lower-cost designs affordable to households with the widest possible range of incomes. This could be achieved through innovative construction methods, cost-effective design choices, material selection, etc.

**Green building and design.** We encourage submissions that meet a recognized green building rating system as described in **Director's Rule 20-2017** and/or incorporate green building and design features, like stormwater management, passive heating and cooling, or sustainable building materials. Submissions should consider how the design or footprint of the ADU could accommodate the retention of existing trees or planting of new trees.

**Privacy.** Submissions should consider the potential relationships of the ADU to the main house and to neighboring lots through design, configuration, profile, and window placement.

**Context.** Submissions should consider the design's potential compatibility with common architectural contexts and development patterns in Seattle's low-density residential neighborhoods.

**Culturally responsive design.** Pre-approved designs should serve households of all cultural backgrounds and practices. Consider how the design could accommodate uses, layouts, or appliances not otherwise well served by Western architecture.

**Constructability.** Designs that can be constructed quickly, simply, and at predictable cost help homeowners to create an ADU. As a cost-saving measure, we also encourage designs that let homeowners complete work themselves.

## Phase two review

In the second phase of review, the committee will discuss the shortlist of submissions from phase one to identify 6-10 designs that, collectively, best advance the following criteria:

**Architectural variety.** To ensure pre-approved plans are useful and appealing to as many residents as possible, we aim to choose plans that are compatible with a range of architectural styles. This reflects not only that aesthetic preferences vary, but also that the existing architectural character in single-family zones varies parcel to parcel and across neighborhoods.

**Broad applicability.** We recognize that each site presents its own opportunities and constraints, and not every pre-approved plan will be feasible on every lot. A key program goal, though, is to offer pre-approved plans that, collectively, are broadly feasible on many single-family lots throughout Seattle. This includes lots with and without alley access; corner and midblock lots; narrow and wide lots; flat and sloping lots; lots with environmentally critical areas and trees; and lots with both ample and limited available lot coverage. Submissions should also reflect conservative loading assumptions given that wind and seismic design loads vary across sites.

## L&I-certified DADUs

We also hope to encourage innovative construction methods, like panelized, prefab, and modular homes, as way to lower cost and construction time and offer more options to homeowners. Prefabricated DADUs certified by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) are not subject to SDCI structural review and thus gain little from SDCI pre-approval. However, to provide more options to interested homeowners, we welcome submissions of L&I-approved ADUs and may feature them in our online gallery in addition to those ADUs pre-approved through this process.

DADU CATEGORIES	PHASE ONE REVIEW	PHASE TWO REVIEW	L&I-CERTIFICATION
<b>Small-footprint DADUs</b> <b>Family-friendly DADUs</b> <b>Accessible DADUs</b> <b>Low-cost DADUs</b> <b>Garage DADUs</b>	<b>Low cost</b> <b>Green building &amp; design</b> <b>Privacy</b> <b>Context</b> <b>Culturally responsive design</b> <b>Constructability</b>	<b>Architectural variety</b> <b>Broad applicability</b>	<b>Submissions of factory-built units certified by Washington L&amp;I are welcome and will be included in our online gallery.</b>



## Submission requirements

### Who can submit a design?

We accept submissions from architects, designers, and builders. We encourage submissions from design–build partnerships who can provide a reliable cost estimate and are familiar with and ready to construct the DADU. We also welcome submissions of built DADUs that include empirical information about actual construction costs.

### How do I submit a design?

Submissions are due by email to [DADUplans@seattle.gov](mailto:DADUplans@seattle.gov) by February 17, 2020, in PDF form. Submissions should generally reflect what architects refer to as the “design development” phase. Plans must be to scale and fully dimensioned.

To provide homeowners will some opportunity to customize the design for their preferences and site, submissions may include up to three options, with variation in elements like roof type, exterior materials, window packages, etc., as indicated in **Tip 310**.

Submissions must include:

- Name and contact information for individual(s) or firm(s) submitting the design
- Project description (150 words maximum)
- Narrative describing how the submission fulfills the design criteria (300 words maximum)
- Estimate of construction cost (this can be a range; can include assumptions for site conditions; and for built DADUs can denote when the project was built and any noteworthy or anomalous factors that affected cost)
- Floor plans (1/4" scale) with dimensioned room sizes
- Building sections (1/4" scale) showing wall and roof assembly
- Building elevations (1/4" scale)
- Three-dimensional views (maximum of four)
- Major materials
- List of mechanical systems
- Photographs of completed DADU (if submitting plans for a built project)
- Price for the plan (up to \$1,000) and hourly rate for any further work



## My design was selected. Now what?

Plans selected for pre-approval must submit a full permit-ready plan set for review by SDCI staff with additional detail and specifications meeting City submittal requirements, including:

- Glazing and opaque door schedule
- Framing and foundation plans
- Architectural and structural details
- Energy calculations if you are not using prescriptive compliance methods
- Heating equipment sizing calculation form
- Structural calculations (optional)
- Structural notes including design loads (when plans are using an engineer design for wind and seismic provisions, lateral design should address the most conservative assumptions in Seattle)
- A signed Memorandum of Agreement outlining responsibilities related to copyright protection, liability, and insurance required of participants (to be provided by the City — see below)

Plans selected for pre-approval should follow the submission requirements identified in the following tip sheets:

- **Tip 106: General Standards for Plans and Drawings**
- **Tip 303: Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single-Family and Two-Unit Dwellings**
- **Tip 303A: Common Seattle Residential Code Requirements**

Plans will be reviewed against the forthcoming 2018 State Building and Energy Codes. More information about this aspect of the process will be available for designers of selected plans.

## Memorandum of Agreement

As part of submitting a permit-ready plan set, each designer will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the City that establishes terms for issues like copyright protection, liability, indemnification, and insurance. Among other terms, the MOA will stipulate that:

- The designer retains ownership of their intellectual property, continues to hold the copyright for their pre-approved plan, but gives the City the right and license to use and copy the plan as necessary to carry out this program.
- The City will pre-approve the plans using its normal Standard Plan process, post images of the pre-approved designs online, and then act as a facilitator, connecting independent architects, designers, and builders with independent Seattle residents and property owners.
- The City reserves the right to remove the pre-approved design from the online gallery for any reason, e.g., if the designer violates the terms of the MOA.
- The designer will not charge more than \$1,000 to homeowners in exchange for a license to use the pre-approved plan, provided that the designer may charge additional fees to prepare a site plan, undertake the permitting process, and/or construct or deliver the DADU.
- The designer indemnifies the City and holds the City harmless.
- Homeowners may be required to sign a disclaimer or release in favor of the City as part of the permitting process if using a pre-approved plan.

## Information session

**Considering submitting a design?** We will hold an information session on January 14, 2019, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in Room 4050 on the 40th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower (700 5th Ave). Architects, designers, and builders can ask questions about the selection process, the design criteria, or how homeowners will use plans selected for pre-approval. All questions and answers from the session will be documented in writing and posted publicly online.

For other questions or to be added to our project email list, contact [DADUplans@seattle.gov](mailto:DADUplans@seattle.gov).

## Using a pre-approved design

**Browse our online gallery.** Once reviewed by SDCI staff, pre-approved DADU plans will be featured in an online gallery. Each plan will include a description of the design, dimensions and specifications, cost estimates, and information about the designer, who retains ownership of their design.

**Connect with the plan's designer.** To use a pre-approved plan, a homeowner connects with its designer, who can prepare the full site plan necessary to get a construction permit. The designer's hourly rate for this service will be included in the plan description.

**Finalize your design.** In general, changes to a pre-approved DADU's structural features are not possible. However, we recognize some variation in options is valuable. A pre-approved plan may offer choices for design elements like roof line (e.g., pitched roof, shed roof), bay window options, variations in foundation wall heights, or window performance. Exterior materials and finishes can be changed provided there is no effect on insulation and other Energy Code requirements. Purely aesthetic characteristics like paint color or interior finishes can be customized to your preferences. Mirroring the floor plan is also allowed provided there are no changes to structural elements.

**Prepare a full site plan.** To get a construction permit to build the DADU, you need to submit a complete plan set that shows the pre-approved DADU on your site. This allows SDCI staff 1) to confirm the DADU design you're using matches the pre-approved plan on file, and 2) to complete review of zoning, foundation design, grading, electrical, and drainage. To simplify this process, a standardized drainage plan is available.

**Get a construction permit.** In most cases, using a pre-approved plan shortens the permit review time to 2-6 weeks, versus up to several months for a typical plan review. You'll pay a reduced permit fee that reflects the time savings from having pre-approved the structure. You also benefit from the certainty that the structural design has already been reviewed and vetted. While typical projects often incur multiple correction cycles that delay construction, pre-approved DADU designs have already been reviewed for structural code compliance, making corrections for this portion of the permit process less likely.