



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

ChrisTiana ObeySumner & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

June 6, 2019

RE: Support for Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Reform

Seattle City Council & Office of the Mayor,

The Seattle Renters Commission urges City Council to make it easier to construct accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and to further use ADUs to fight the affordability and displacement crisis.

Our affordability and displacement crises need little introduction. Rents have risen by [60%](#) from 2010 to 2017. [46%](#) of renters in Seattle are “cost burdened”, meaning they spend more than 30% of their incomes on rent. Neighborhoods like the Central District, whose black population has [fallen from 70% to 20%](#) since the 1960s, have been torn apart by displacement.

Making it easier to construct ADUs will give the city more ways to address these crises. ADUs are unique in that they allow us to construct new housing without having to tear down existing homes. The city’s Environmental Impact Statement suggests that ADU reform would “moderate increases in housing prices” and reduce the number of existing homes being torn down.

The Seattle Renters’ Commission urges the City to pass ADU reform and then go further:

- There should be no owner-occupancy requirement for ADUs because:
 - We should enable small, mom-and-pop landlords to welcome more renters to an ADU on their property without having to move into the main house.
 - Renters should legally be allowed to live anywhere homeowners are allowed.
- According to the city’s [Environmental Impact Statement](#), ADU reform would have a “positive impact on affordability and decrease the potential for economic displacement”. Consequently, we should encourage the construction of ADUs by removing unnecessary red tape. Thus:
 - There should be no onsite parking requirement when building a new ADU.
 - There should be no requirement to own a property for 1 year before building a second ADU.
- The City should examine how we can use ADUs to provide shelter to our homeless neighbors. Programs like the [Block Project](#), which enables homeowners to welcome unsheltered neighbors into an onsite ADU, provide great examples of what’s possible.
- The City should subsidize construction of ADUs in high-displacement areas so that previously displaced renters can return to neighborhoods with their friends, family, and neighbors. These programs should be as targeted as possible to benefit communities that have suffered the most from displacement.

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- We should ensure that new landlords of ADUs are given full education of renters' rights and should offer pre-written leases that ensure adequate protections for both renters and new landlords.
- We should ensure ADUs aren't tools for Airbnb "mega hosts" to take large amounts of housing away from renters.
- We should ensure tenants in ADUs benefit from the same tenant protections that renters in traditional rental housing have.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Seattle Renters' Commission

Cc: Andres Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods