

Removing Barriers to Backyard Cottages & ADUs

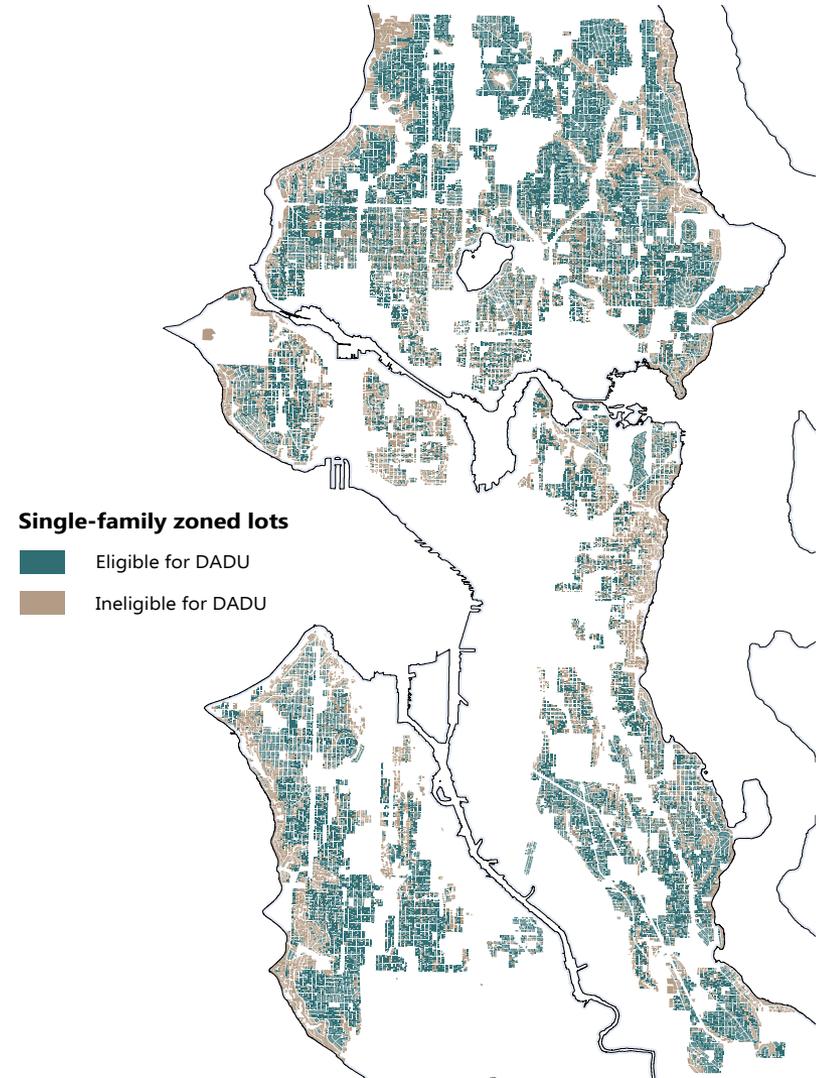
February 11, 2016
Seattle Planning Commission

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 that helps homeowners remain in neighborhood
- Flexibility to adapt to changing needs
- “Infill” development means efficient use of land and resources
- Opportunity for housing suitable to diverse household types, including families

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



Removing barriers to backyard cottages and ADUs

- » Reached out to homeowners, designers, and other stakeholders
- » Identified several barriers:
 - Many lots are under 4,000 square feet but could 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 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

March 2016

Draft legislation
SEPA review

April 2015

City Council
Lunch & Learn 1

December 2015

City Council
Lunch & Learn 2

February 3, 2016

Community Meeting #2
Wallingford Senior Center

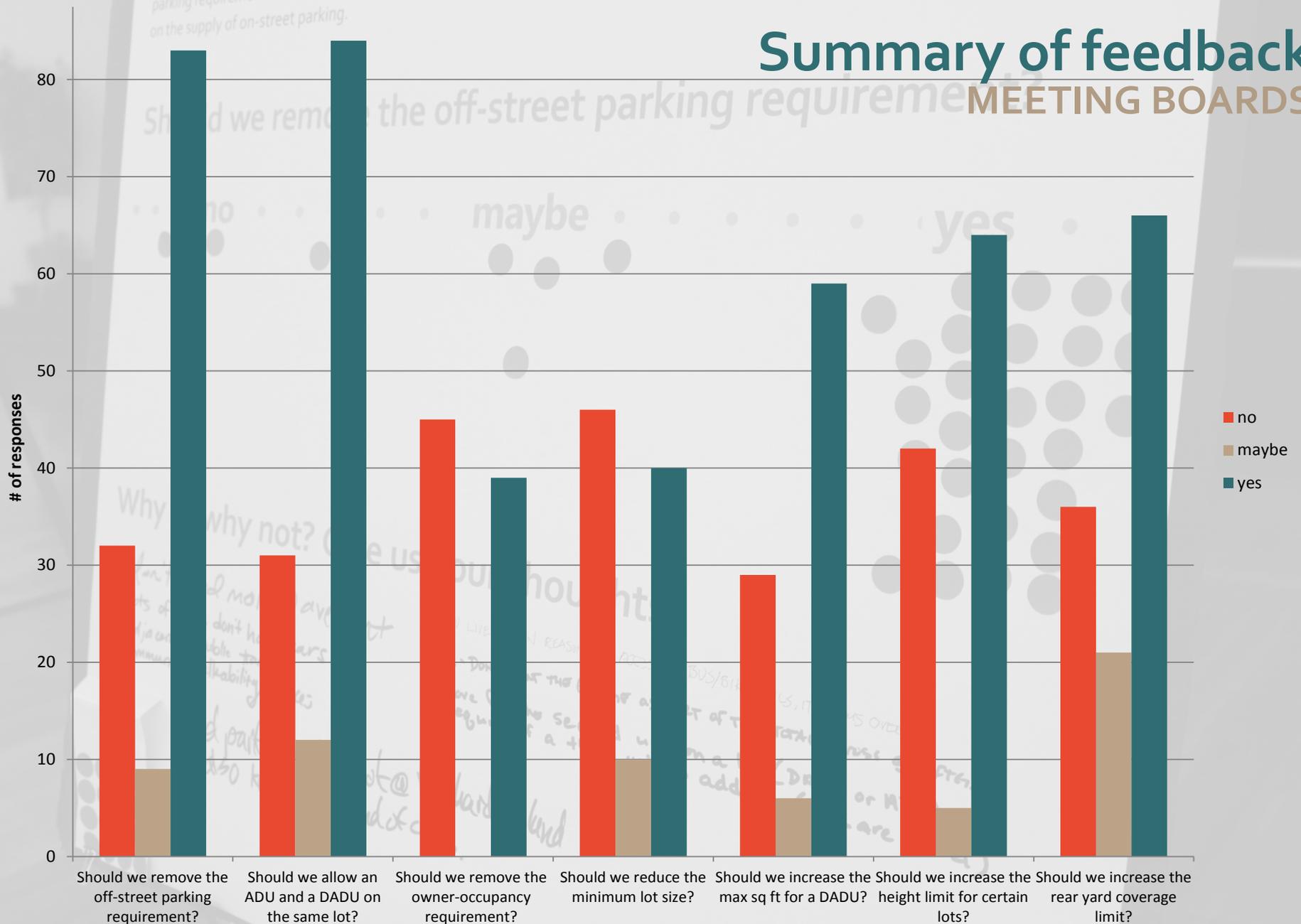


Potential code changes

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

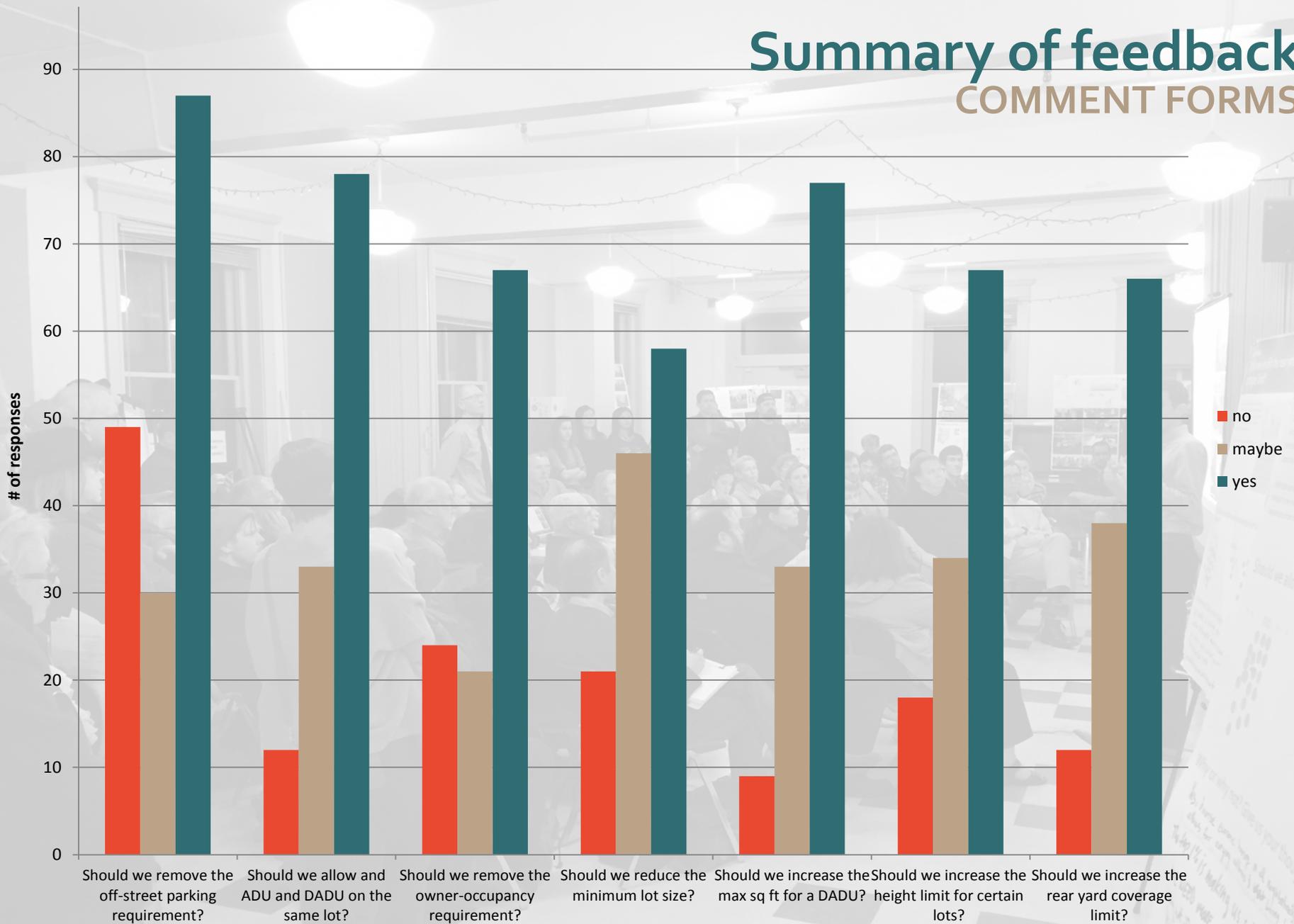
Summary of feedback

MEETING BOARDS



Summary of feedback

COMMENT FORMS



Should we remove the owner-occupancy requirement?

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 owner-occupancy requirement?

» Case study: Portland, OR

Portland does not have an owner-occupancy requirement and allows both the accessory dwelling unit and the main house to be rented. Despite this, a survey of ADU owners found that 64% occupy their properties anyway. The vast majority of accessory units in Portland are built by current homeowners.

Even after waiving system development charges for ADUs, Portland had only 360 permitted in 2015.

Should we remove the off-street parking requirement?

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.

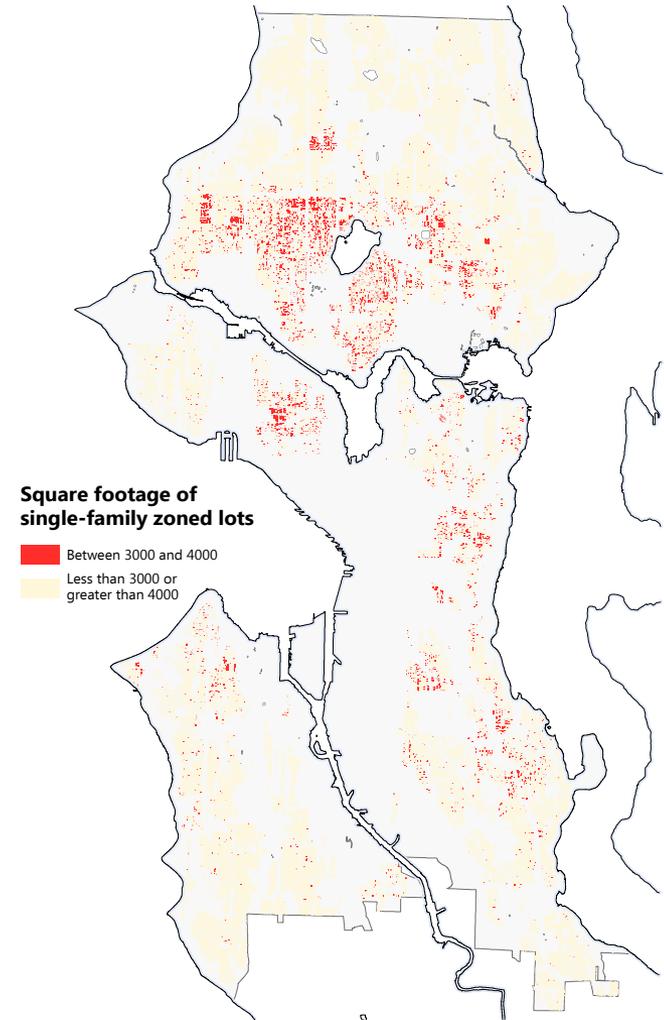
We have considered building a DADU in the Phinney/Greenwood neighborhood, but cannot due to the requirement that we add a second parking space, which is not feasible given the configuration and size of our lot. Moreover, there are several nearby bus lines and a variety of amenities that make living without 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.

Should we modify development standards?

- » Support for excluding garage/storage space in square footage calculation
- » Support for changing minimum lot size
- » Support for adjusting rear yard coverage limit to facilitate one-story cottage designs
- » General agreement overall lot coverage is a good limit on structures
- » Concern about privacy and shadow impacts on neighboring properties



Other feedback we've heard

- » Database of other ADU/DADU owners, reliable architects and builders
- » Interest in pre-approved designs/plans
- » Access to financing could help a lot of homeowners
- » More flexibility with development standards to account for wide range of lot situations
- » Provide incentives for green design, affordable rents
- » How are my property taxes affected?
- » What is allowed for existing nonconforming structures?

Other feedback we've heard

- » **“These changes will benefit middle class households who are being priced out of Seattle.”**
- » **“Back up your affordability claims with some facts.”**
- » **How many ADUs/DADUs are used for Airbnb?**
- » **“Please liberalize the rules so that we can have a mix of properties and structures in the same neighborhoods.”**
- » **“Make sure there are incentives for trees and rain gardens and make sure nobody’s solar panels get blocked.”**

Next steps

- » Early March: draft legislation based on public feedback received on policy options
- » SEPA review and 21-day comment period

For more information:

seattle.gov/council/obrien/backyardcottages/

seattle.gov/DPD/cityplanning/completenesslist/backyardcottages

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