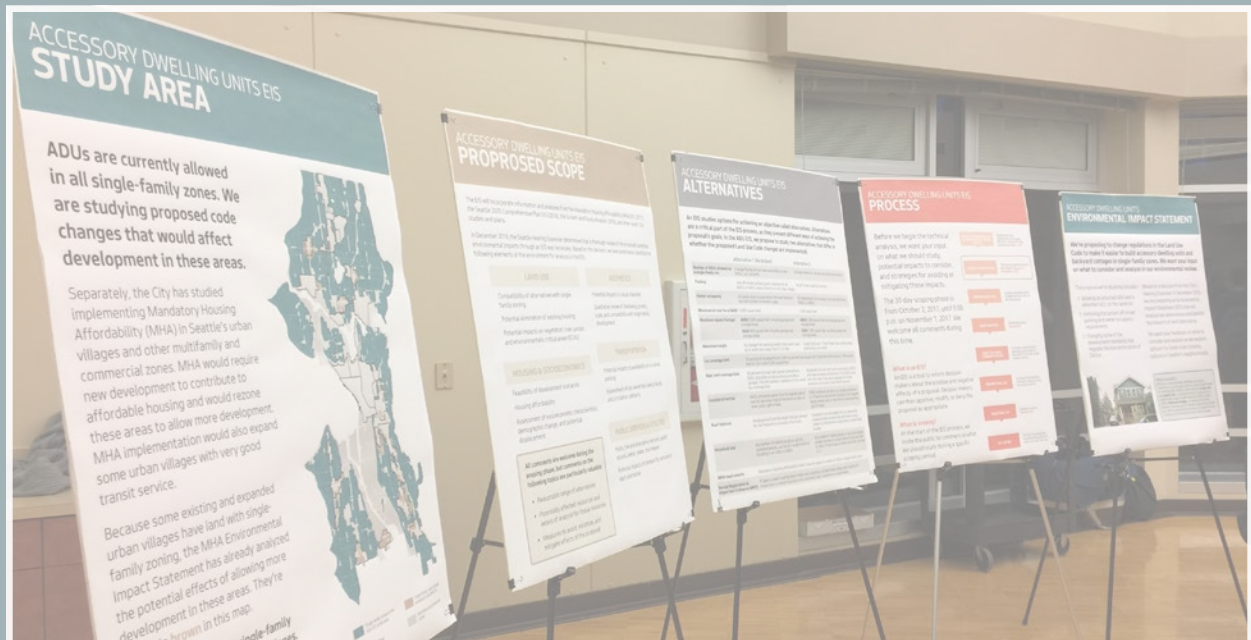


Accessory Dwelling Units Environmental Impact Statement



Scoping Report
JANUARY 8, 2018



Seattle

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Acronyms, abbreviations, and common terms

Acronyms

ADU	Accessory dwelling unit
AADU	Attached accessory dwelling unit
DADU	Detached accessory dwelling unit
DS	Determination of Significance
ECA	Environmentally critical area
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
LR	Lowrise
OH	Office of Housing
OPCD	Office of Planning & Community Development
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RRIO	Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance
RSL	Residential Small Lot
SDCI	Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SMC	Seattle Municipal Code
WAC	Washington Administrative Code

Abbreviations

City	City of Seattle
Seattle 2035	The recent update to the City's 20-year Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2016

Common terms

AADU	in-law unit, granny flat
DADU	backyard cottage
lead agency	Seattle City Council

Introduction

This report summarizes the City's scoping process for the Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with [RCW 43.21C.030 \(2\)\(c\)](#). This document describes the public involvement process for the EIS scoping phase and summarizes all comments received during the scoping period. We've included all comments received as appendices to this report.

Project Description

The City of Seattle is proposing to change Land Use Code regulations to increase the production of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in single-family zones and allow flexibility for larger ADUs that could accommodate Seattle's changing demographic needs. ADUs include backyard cottages, known as detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs), and in-law apartments, known as attached accessory dwelling units (AADUs). Citywide, AADUs have been allowed as part of a single-family house since 1994, while DADUs have been allowed in the backyard of a single-family-zoned lot since 2010.

The City's proposed changes would modify the rules that regulate when and where a property owner can create an ADU, with the objectives of:

- Removing regulatory barriers to make it easier for property owners to permit and build ADUs
- Increasing the number and variety of housing choices available in single-family zones
- Encouraging creation of small-scale, family-friendly homes affordable to a range of households and flexible for their changing needs

Specifically, this proposal would affect development in single-family zones by making amendments to a suite

of development standards that affect ADU production, including:

- Allowing two ADUs on one lot
- Removing or modifying the existing off-street parking and owner-occupancy requirements
- Changing some development standards that regulate the size and location of DADUs
- Increasing the number of unrelated people that can live on a single-family lot with an ADU
- Modifying development standards focused on the size, scale, and siting of both the primary residence (i.e., the main house) and ADUs

Exhibit 1 shows the study area for this EIS, which includes all lands zoned single-family outside current urban villages and urban village expansions proposed as part of citywide implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA).

Based on a Hearing Examiner's [decision](#) in December 2016, we are preparing an EIS that will analyze alternatives and identify the environmental impacts of each alternative.

This scoping report was prepared by the City of Seattle:

**Legislative Department — Council Central Staff
Office of Planning and Community Development**

Contact the project team at ADUEIS@seattle.gov

Purpose of Scoping

Scoping is the first step in the EIS process. To begin the ADU EIS scoping period, the City invited agencies, tribes, local communities, organizations, and the public to comment on what we should evaluate in the EIS. Specifically, we invited agencies, tribes, local communities, organizations, and the public to comment on the following topics:

- Reasonable range of alternatives
- Potentially affected resources and the extent of analysis for those resources
- Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts of the proposal

The next section in this report summarizes the letters, emails, comment forms, and online comments received. In response and as appropriate, we will refine the scope of the environmental analysis and the composition of the action alternatives compared to the proposed scope outlined in the scoping notice. The last section describes how we intend to modify the EIS scope based on this feedback. Additional modifications may be identified and incorporated into the analysis after publication of this report.

The Washington State Department of Ecology also has information about [SEPA](#) and the [EIS](#) process.

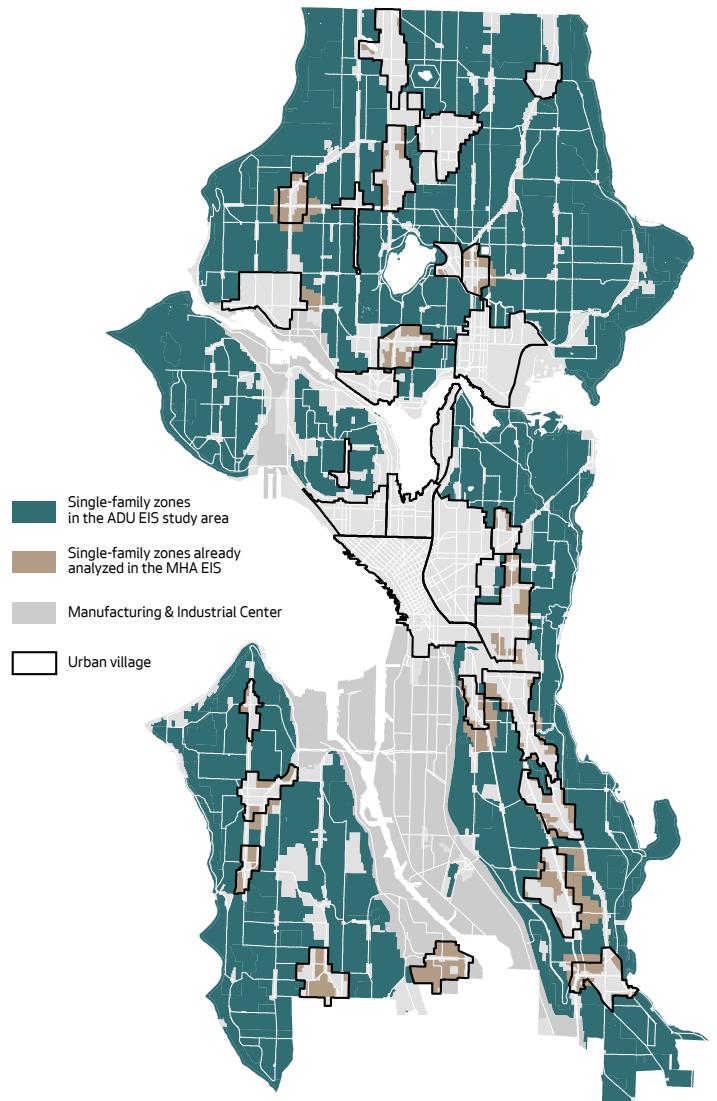


Exhibit 1 EIS study area map

Scoping Process

Notification

Determination of Significance

The scoping period began when we issued a Determination of Significance (DS) on October 2, 2017. The DS stated that the proposal may have significant adverse impacts on the environment and therefore required an EIS (Appendix A). Washington State law requires a 21-day public comment period for the scoping phase of an EIS ([WAC 197-11-408](#)). Prior to issuing the DS, we elected to extend the standard scoping comment period to 30 days, ending on November 1, 2017. The notice also announced two public scoping meetings and provided links to a [project website](#) and online scoping comment form. Before its scheduled end on November 1, we received requests from the public to extend the scoping comment period. In response to these requests, we announced on October 31 that we had extended the comment period 15 days ending on November 16, 2017.

Notification

We notified key stakeholders, interested parties, agencies, and the general public of the DS and scoping comment period using various communication tools, including:

- Announcement of the scoping comment period in the City's Land Use Information Bulletin and in the Daily Journal of Commerce
- Email announcement to more than 300 addresses
- Email announcement to local media outlets
- Postings on City blogs and in department newsletters
- Postings on Facebook and Twitter

The announcements included the following details:

- Description of the proposed project
- Environmental Determination
- Elements of the environment that we proposed to study
- Identification of the Seattle City Council as the lead agency
- Description of opportunities to provide scoping comments in writing, by email, or using an online comment form
- Information about two public scoping meetings
- Link to the EIS scoping comment period online



Opportunities to Comment

Public scoping meetings

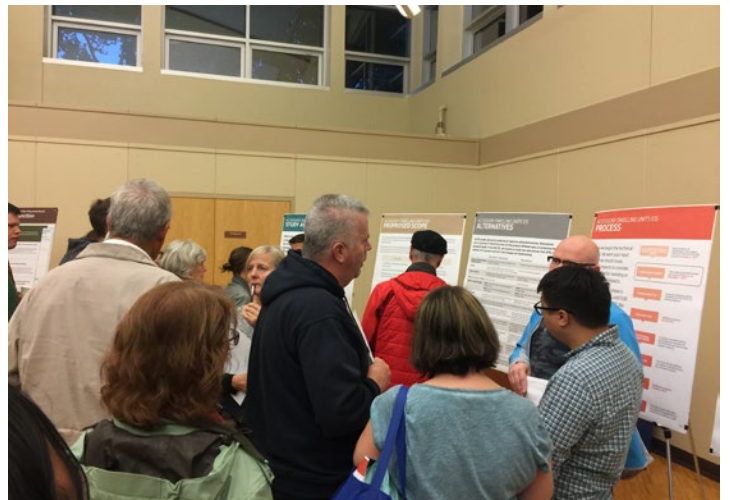
The City held two scoping meetings on October 17 and October 26, 2017, at High Point Community Center in West Seattle and Hale's Ales in Ballard, respectively. We provided information about the EIS on several poster boards and gave a presentation midway through the meeting. We also distributed an informational handout and scoping comment form, and many people submitted written comments at and after the meeting. The boards, handout, and form were all available online at the project website during the entire scoping period. We uploaded a video recording of the presentation at the first scoping meeting.



We received approximately 58 written comment forms at the two meetings.

Online comment form

We created an online comment form available on the project website. We received 571 scoping comments through this online form.



ADU EIS email address

We also created a project-specific email address for the EIS, ADUEIS@seattle.gov, in order to receive public scoping comments via email. Staff replied to emails confirming receipt of each comment. During the scoping period, we received 414 emails.

Written comments

Lastly, we received five written comments sent to us by mail.

comment type	number
written comment forms	58
online comment forms	571
email comments	414
comments by mail	5
total	1,048

Exhibit 2 Number of comments received by comment type

Summary of Comments

This section summarizes the comments received during the scoping period. For each EIS topic, we describe broad themes and summarize comments. All letters, emails, and written comments received at the public scoping meetings are compiled in Appendices B through E (see section 4 for a discussion of the comments).

Some stakeholders included petitions and surveys they conducted as a means to capture the opinions of several people. Thank you for sharing the results of these efforts, which are included in Appendix C.

Approach & Alternatives

Comments on the approach to the EIS analysis

We received suggestions about the types of analysis we should use to identify possible environmental impacts of each alternative.

- Consider impacts at a range of scales: a single block, a neighborhood, citywide, and the broader region.
- Consider impacts for each single-family neighborhood individually.
- Consider citywide and regional impacts that may result from not allowing additional density in single-family zones.
- Consider the positive environmental and affordability impacts of increased density. Discuss the broader environmental impacts on forests, sprawl, and climate of limiting density and growth in urbanized places like Seattle.
- Study impacts of existing regulations.
- Consider ways to expedite the EIS process so changes are implemented sooner.

- Consider waiving certain fees for ADUs to incentivize people to build them.

Comments on alternatives

Several comments addressed the number and composition of alternatives, including requests that we expand the proposed action alternative or add a third alternative in order to broaden the scope of the analysis. Some comments suggested a third alternative composed of a more aggressive scenario that allows duplexes, triplexes, and small apartments and considers smaller minimum lot sizes for subdivision in single-family zones. Others requested an alternative whose intensity is between our proposed Alternative 1 (No Action) and Alternative 2 by excluding certain changes, such as leaving the owner occupancy requirement in place, or through other actions that restrict ADU production.

- Include an alternative with policies more restrictive than current regulations that would limit or eliminate changes to single-family zones.
- Consider and implement the no action alternative.
- Evaluate the negative impacts of alternatives that limit additional ADUs and therefore produce fewer housing options in single-family zones.
- Consider an approach that encourages homeowners to build ADUs without any Land Use Code changes.
- Consider an alternative that varies policy changes depending on individual neighborhood characteristics, rather than one approach for all single-family zones. For example, an alternative could remove the off-street parking requirement only in areas with a certain level of transit service and allow an AADU and DADU only on larger lots.

- Including only one action alternative conflicts with SEPA requirements.
- Include an alternative that allows a broader range of small-scale housing types beyond ADUs.
- Consider allowing a smaller minimum lot size for subdivision in single-family zones to increase opportunities for homeownership.
- Study applying Residential Small Lot (RSL) zoning in some or all single-family zoned areas in the city.

Housing & Socioeconomics

Comments on the variety of housing

We received many comments about housing types and sizes in single-family zones. A frequent theme was the size, scale, and cost of new detached single-family houses. Comments also addressed how different policies affect households' ability to accommodate their changing needs over time.

- Current rules for development in single-family zones allow only large, expensive new houses.
- Consider allowing larger ADUs to accommodate families with children and multi-generational households.
- Consider increasing the number of unrelated adults that can live on a lot.
- Consider decreasing the number of unrelated adults that can live on a lot.

Comments on housing cost and affordability

People frequently expressed concerns about the rising cost of housing in Seattle, and specifically in single-family zones. Many scoping comments said ADUs offer a rental housing option at a lower price point than single-family houses. Others worried that ADUs rented at market-rate, or used as short-term rentals, would not be available or

affordable to low-income households. Commenters encouraged us to explore strategies and tools beyond Land Use Code changes to create rent- and income-restricted ADUs. We also received comments about how rental income from an ADU can give homeowners more financial stability.

- Distinguish AADUs and DADUs in terms of typical rents. AADUs are more affordable because they're cheaper to construct, they're often self-financed, and retaining a good tenant is more valuable than maximizing rent.
- Consider the potential impact of strategies for making it cheaper and simpler for homeowners to create ADUs, distinct from the proposed code changes.
- Study the impacts on property taxes from allowing more development and rental income from single-family lots. Consider codifying tax protections.
- Study the impacts on the cost of housing and displacement created by allowing ADUs to be used as short-term rentals.
- Study the impacts of applying MHA requirements on the production and affordability of ADUs.

Comments on owner occupancy

Many comments received focused on the intention to study removing the owner-occupancy requirement. Comments addressed the possibility of more renters in single-family zones, potential impacts of rental units without the homeowner living on site, and effects of allowing owners living elsewhere to build ADUs on their property. A common theme was concern that this change could increase speculation, accelerate the pace of redevelopment, and alter the scale of form of development in single-family zones.

Other comments noted that landlords aren't required to live on the property of a unit in other circumstances

(like apartment buildings, townhouse developments, or single-family houses) and encouraged the City to explore whether requiring an owner to live on site is in fact legal.

- Study how removing the owner-occupancy requirement, coupled with allowing two ADUs on one lot, could encourage real estate investors to build three rental units in single-family zones.
- Consider how removing owner-occupancy can bring affordability and flexibility to Seattle's ADU policy.
- The owner-occupancy requirement makes it harder for homeowners to get financing, making it harder for people with less wealth and equity to build ADUs.
- Compare the impacts of helping homeowners afford to build a DADU or convert space to an AADU versus allowing investors to create ADUs by removing the occupancy requirement.
- Consider studying a one- or two-year occupancy requirement to prohibit nonresident developers from building ADUs.
- Consider requiring an on-site property manager for lots with ADUs if the owner lives elsewhere.
- Consider removing the owner-occupancy requirement only for lots in urban villages or multifamily zones.
- Require ADU owners to obtain a City business license if they don't live on the property.

Comments on displacement

Comments addressed the potential impacts of each alternative on displacement, or the involuntary relocation of households from their current residence. Some comments concerned physical displacement that can result from eviction, acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition of property. Others concerned economic displacement that

occurs when residents can no longer afford escalating rents or property taxes.

- Evaluate whether the proposed changes will cause or accelerate displacement of families and current residents.
- Study the market-wide effects of increased supply on prices, rents, and economic displacement under the conditions of a housing shortage.
- Explore whether under the no action alternative fewer ADUs could accelerate rent increases of existing housing and result in greater economic displacement.
- Consider how variations in market strength affect real estate development economics when analyzing displacement.
- When examining how ADU policy affects marginalized communities, consider the widest possible range of both impacts and benefits, including whether ADUs offer lower-cost housing, better access to high-opportunity neighborhoods, and supplemental income for homeowners.
- Study whether allowing ADUs to be used as short-term rentals (i.e., rented through online platforms like Airbnb) would accelerate displacement.

Land Use

Comments on density and scale

We received comments about potential impacts resulting from density and scale changes if ADU production increases due to the proposed Land Use Code changes.

- Allow two ADUs only on large lots (e.g., more than 10,000 square feet).
- Study regulating the size of ADUs according to lot size and the existing residential

structure. Don't allow DADUs above a certain percentage of the size of the main house.

- Consider potential impacts of increased noise generated from more people living on a lot, particularly when they use outdoor space.
- Evaluate potential impacts on solar access for neighboring properties that abut a lot with a DADU.
- Consider limiting DADUs to one story to reduce impacts on views and solar access.
- Lowering the minimum lot size would allow three homes on a 3,200-square-foot lot, which is denser than allowed in a Lowrise 1 zone. Consider different minimum lot sizes for one ADU versus two ADUs.
- Support for increasing the maximum size of DADUs to 1,000 square feet.
- Consider allowing someone to designate an existing house that's under 1,000 square feet as a DADU and then construct a new, larger primary structure on the remainder of the lot.

Trees and vegetation

Several comments identified impacts on trees as an area deserving analysis in the EIS.

- Evaluate if the action alternative will increase removal of trees and/or reduce tree canopy.
- Identify ways to mitigate the tree loss due to ADU construction.
- Consider impacts of loss of vegetation and tree cover on stormwater runoff and sewer capacity.
- Consider the potential impact on open space, trees, and urban forest canopy volume. Analyze how the alternatives affect

the neighborhood tree canopy goals in the [Urban Forest Stewardship Plan](#).

- Evaluate the potential impacts of urban heat islands if green space is reduced and resulting impacts on wildlife.

Aesthetics

Various development standards regulate the size, scale, and location of DADUs, including maximum size, height, and rear yard coverage limits. Other standards address other aesthetic features, like roof features and the location of entries. We received comments concerning potential impacts of the alternatives on height, bulk, and scale that could result from allowing slightly larger DADUs. Some comments also addressed possible changes to urban form.

- Consider regulating height not only by lot width but also street width.
- Study allowing DADUs to be constructed in the required side yard setback.
- Consider allowing AADUs and/or DADUs to be even larger than proposed (e.g., up to 1,200 square feet or no size limit).
- Allowing more ADUs could affect neighborhoods' historic resources. Consider standards that would encourage retention of the historic urban fabric.
- Consider the visual impacts of new, larger DADUs in the context of new single-family homes.

Transportation & Parking

Many of the commenters suggested changes related to transportation and parking. A recurring theme focused on potential impacts of removing the off-street parking requirement for ADUs. Many commenters observed

that parking is already challenging in many single-family-zoned zones and worried that, if more ADUs are constructed, parking problems will worsen. Others expressed a preference for removing the parking requirement as that is identified as one of the main barriers to building an ADU.

- Consider impacts on roads (wear and tear) and capacity of existing roadways.
- Study access issues created by increased traffic and parking congestion on city streets (i.e., it may impede access for sanitation services, emergency vehicles, delivery trucks, etc.)
- Consider impacts of bike and pedestrian safety with the introduction of increased density.
- Consider the positive impacts of reducing impervious surface by eliminating the off-street parking requirement.
- Consider maintaining the parking requirement; demand of on-street parking in single-family zones is already high. Increasing density in these areas will create more problems.
- If parking is not required, consider prohibiting occupants from owning cars.
- Eliminate parking requirements to increase flexibility and reduce costs.
- Consider varying parking requirements based on proximity to transit service.
- Consider eliminating the parking requirement but prohibit the elimination of any existing parking.
- Require property owners to create off-street parking for ADUs built on lots near destinations that attract non-resident cars, like a ferry dock.

- Consider how the proposal may increase or decrease greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

Public Services & Utilities

We received some comments about potential impacts on public services and utilities resulting from population growth in single-family zones. People also commented on the costs associated with certain utility and infrastructure requirements when creating an ADU.

- Consider eliminating the requirement for separate utility meters for AADUs.
- Study the impact on public school capacity of encouraging ADUs and increasing the maximum household size.
- Consider impacts on other public services, including community centers, libraries, parks, pools, and public amenities.
- Consider impacts on utility infrastructure including electricity service, telephone, broadband capacity, and waste generation.
- Consider incentivizing stormwater runoff management by providing credits for the King County sewer capacity charge.
- Do not require DADUs to have a separate side sewer connection. It's cost prohibitive and unnecessary when one can connect to the existing sewer line.
- Study the sewer capacity of individual neighborhoods and potential for increased flooding due to increased impervious surfaces.
- Consider the public safety impacts from allowing dwelling units in backyards where access is harder for police and fire services.

- Require that areas below-grade converted to ADUs (or any other habitable space) demonstrate compliance with the [Seattle Plumbing Code](#) section 710.

Other Themes

- Consider allowing legalization of existing non-permitted ADUs without requiring that they meet all code standards (e.g., insulation requirements) as long as they're structurally sound.
- Consider an approach that includes allowing an RV or tiny home to be considered an ADU.
- Rename the "Single Family" zone to "Residential."
- Consider exempting ADUs from the City's Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO).
- Require property owners to notify neighbors when they propose to create an ADU.
- Clarify the objectives of the proposal so that other reasonable alternatives of achieving it are easier to identify.
- Outreach during scoping seemed minimal and should include meetings in each single-family zone neighborhood.

Consideration of Comments

We received more than one thousand comments on the scope of the EIS. Some of these comments addressed aspects of the proposal or elements of the environment that we already planned to analyze. Many comments also stated either general support or opposition to the City's proposal to remove barriers to increase the production of ADUs in single-family zones. While they may not directly influence the scope of study for the EIS, we acknowledge and appreciate these comments.

In this section, we describe how we are considering comments as we determine the scope of the EIS analysis. This section outlines how our proposed approach includes elements of the environment and evaluates aspects of the proposal that commenters highlighted. It also identifies specific changes or modifications to the EIS scope that we are considering based on the comments we received.

The next opportunity to provide feedback will occur after we issue the Draft EIS. This will occur before the City Council adopts any proposed legislation.

Approach & Alternatives

The proposed Land Use Code changes would affect development in all single-family zones. Therefore, the EIS analysis will evaluate all single-family zones outside urban villages. (Single-family zones inside current and expanded urban village boundaries were studied in the MHA EIS.) Where appropriate, the analysis will also consider variations among single-family-zoned areas. This could include, for example, considering how potential impacts vary between areas with large lots and areas with smaller or varied lot sizes, comparing how impacts vary between areas with and without alley access, and evaluating differences in transit access across areas with single-family zoning. We will evaluate impacts at different scales, including on individual parcels and blocks, in accordance with the Hearing Examiner's decision. To the extent possible, the EIS will also discuss the broader regional impacts of the proposal by estimating ADU

production under each alternative and its effect on the supply of housing.

The EIS will document existing conditions and identify likely future outcomes under each alternative. SEPA requires that we include an alternative representing no action in which we evaluate what would most likely occur if the proposed changes to the Land Use Code did not occur, i.e., if we do nothing. SEPA does not require the lead agency to include an alternative besides the no action alternative and the proposed action. Initially, the City determined that one action alternative would be sufficient for this EIS. After reviewing scoping comments, staff decided to modify the initial action alternative and include a second action alternative. Accordingly, we are considering expanding the range of changes to development standards and regulatory barriers that we analyze in the EIS. In order to study a broader range of code modifications, we are considering a second action alternative. The two alternatives for implementing the proposed action could incorporate the following changes:

- » Allowing two AADUs on a lot, in addition to what was already proposed (allowing a DADU and AADU)
- » Varying the parking requirements
- » Varying the owner-occupancy requirements
- » Introducing an FAR limit in single-family zones
- » Allowing ADUs to exceed the maximum square foot allowance if the portion of the structure where the ADU is located existed prior to a date specified
- » Allowing one to two additional feet in height for a DADU that meets green roof standards
- » Varying the household size requirements

- » Consider the potential effects on ADU production of new programs or policies that reduce the permitting time and predevelopment costs for ADUs
- » Applying Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements when an ADU is added

Suggestions outside this proposal

Some comments suggested changes that are not included as part of the proposed action. One suggestion was to reduce the minimum lot size for subdivision in single-family zones in order to allow separate ownership of *principal* dwelling units. This proposal focuses on increasing *accessory* dwelling units in single-family zones. Therefore, such a change is not included in our action alternatives.

Similarly, changing zoning designations in the study area, for example by rezoning land to the RSL zone, is not included in this proposal. The EIS will not fully evaluate the effects of such a rezone, but we may discuss and identify how the proposed action would differ from more intensive or comprehensive land use changes, like a rezone to RSL.

Finally, some comments suggested an alternative that limits development and change in single-family zones. This suggestion would not meet the proposal's objective to increase ADU production and therefore is not included as an alternative in the EIS.

The EIS will include a section discussing in more detail various alternatives considered but not included in the analysis. The City can also consider implementing suggestions outside this project's scope as part of a separate proposal that would have its own environmental review. The analysis in this EIS could inform future environmental review.

The following sections provide further details about the composition of the analysis and alternatives.

Housing & Socioeconomics

The housing and socioeconomics analysis will evaluate the potential effects of the no action and action alternatives on future housing development in single-family zones. To describe the affected environment, the analysis will present currently available demographic and economic data for Seattle and the study area, including data on race and ethnicity, income, household characteristics, cost burden, housing type and size, and historical trends and patterns. In addition, the analysis will leverage and build on the City's [Growth and Equity Analysis](#) and other data sources to examine neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics in the study area, current housing costs and affordability, and the relative potential for displacement.

The EIS will analyze how AADUs and DADUs vary in cost, potential rental income, and other trade-offs under each alternative. We will discuss how these differences could affect ADU production, indirectly affect housing costs, and in turn cause displacement of current residents, in particular marginalized communities. This will include consideration of how certain changes, like removal of the owner-occupancy requirement, might affect the economic environment and the development options available to property owners. We will also consider the economic differences of using ADUs as short- and long-term rentals.

Based on scoping comments, we propose to vary the owner-occupancy requirement between the two action alternatives. As shown in Exhibit 1, the EIS study area does not include multifamily zones or single-family zones in urban villages. Therefore, the EIS will not consider removing the owner-occupancy requirement only for lots in urban villages or multifamily zones, as they are outside the EIS study area.

Several comments suggested measures to reduce the costs of constructing an ADU and to support housing affordability. While this EIS focuses on Land Use Code changes, the City is separately considering several possible strategies for reducing the costs for homeowners to create ADUs and incentivizing creation of rent-restricted

ADUs for low-income people. These potential strategies are not included in the alternatives but may be discussed as mitigation measures to address potential impacts identified during the environmental analysis. Based on scoping comments, we intend to introduce MHA requirements in one action alternative that apply when someone creates a second ADU.

Comments also mentioned potential impacts on property taxes. The King County Assessor determines property taxes by multiplying a citywide tax rate by a property's assessed value, or the Assessor's estimate of the amount for which a property could sell. The EIS will discuss how assessed value could change when someone creates an ADU.

Land Use

We will review potential impacts land use patterns and development in Seattle's single-family residential areas. This will include analysis of increased housing and population density and evaluation of whether the action alternatives will result in a fundamental change to the land use form.

In addition, the analysis will qualitatively assess potential impacts of the alternatives on vegetation, tree canopy, and ECAs.

Based on scoping comments, the two action alternatives will differ in the maximum number of unrelated adults that can live on a lot in a single-family zone.

Some comments focused on the potential impacts of increased noise on properties with ADUs. The Noise Control Code (SMC [Chapter 25.08](#)) applies to unreasonable noise in residential areas that disturbs another person. Generally, noise is unlawful if it is knowingly caused and continues even after being ordered to stop by a police officer; if it is loud, frequent, or continuous; and if it occurs occurring between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. The Seattle Police Department enforces these provisions of the SMC. Because the proposed uses under any alternative would be consistent with existing uses, we do not antici-

pate significant impacts to noise levels, as defined in the Seattle Noise Code.

Aesthetics

The aesthetics analysis will evaluate the existing development character and urban form in single-family zones, including building height, bulk, and scale. We will identify potential impacts of each alternative on shadowing, privacy, scale, and compatibility with single-family zones.

Visual simulations of development under each alternative will illustrate potential impacts of the proposed changes to development standards that would allow slightly larger or taller DADUs and could lead to relatively more ADUs on a typical block compared to no action.

Transportation & Parking

The transportation analysis will be based largely on the analysis completed for the [Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan EIS](#) (completed in 2016) and updated with current information. It will also draw on the City's [modal plans](#) including the Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, and Transit Master Plan. The analysis will consider potential impacts on circulation, transit, and parking.

The EIS will include a parking analysis that evaluates the potential impacts of removing off-street parking requirements for ADUs, including how allowing two ADUs on the same lot could affect parking conditions in the study area. The analysis will discuss additional demand for on-street parking and potential impacts on circulation, transit, and parking. Based on scoping comments, we are considering an alternative that would maintain an off-street parking requirement if someone adds a second ADU to their property.

Public Services & Utilities

Using the analysis and data gathered for the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan EIS, the ADU EIS will disclose the potential impacts of each alternative on demand for services overall and in different geographic areas of the city.

The public services and utilities analysis will focus primarily on how the impacts of this proposal differ, if at all, from the analysis and findings in the Comprehensive Plan EIS. We may summarize material and reference findings from the Comprehensive Plan EIS.

Other themes

Existing non-permitted ADUs

The City has a process for permitting a use not currently established by permit, such as a non-permitted ADU, if it was legal when it started but not permitted under current land use code regulations or development standards (see [Tip 217, How to Legalize a Use Not Established by Permit](#)).

Tiny Homes and RVs

The Land Use Code treats tiny houses on wheels like camper trailers. In Seattle, a dwelling unit must have a permanent foundation. Therefore, a person cannot live in a tiny house on wheels (or similar equipment such as RVs and boats) in city limits.

RRIO

The City's RRIO program helps ensure that all rental housing in Seattle is safe and meets basic housing maintenance requirements. Staff reviewed the RRIO program requirements and registration and inspection fees and did not identify this as a major barrier to the production of ADUs in single-family zones. Therefore, waiving RRIO requirements for ADUs is not included for consideration in this EIS.

Communication and outreach

The objective of the proposal is stated on page 1 of this scoping report and will be clearly articulated in the EIS document. We acknowledge the comments we received about outreach and notification. After we issue the Draft EIS, there will be a public comment period and opportunities to provide verbal and written comment. Please see [our website](#) for information about the project and future engagement opportunities.

FAQs

What are ADUs?

ADUs are small secondary dwelling units inside, attached to, or in the rear yard of a single-family house. An attached ADU (AADU), often called an in-law unit or a granny flat, is contained within or attached to a single-family house. A detached ADU (DADU), often called a backyard cottage, is a separate structure allowed in the rear yard of certain single-family-zoned lots. DADUs can be new structures or created through conversion of an existing structure, like a garage.

Why is the City considering changes to the Land Use Code to increase the production of ADUs in single-family zones?

Begun in 2014, the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) convened a 28-member advisory committee to outline bold strategies for increasing the affordability and availability of housing in Seattle. Included in their [65 recommendations](#) was a strategy to boost production of ADUs by removing code barriers that make it difficult to build AADUs and DADUs.

Seattle is facing a housing crisis. As our population grows, housing production is not keeping pace with demand. A shortage of homes for everyone who wants to live here is one factor affecting housing affordability in Seattle. As the cost of housing increases, people drive longer distances between a home that is affordable and where they work, or double up to share space, both of which reduce quality of life and produce negative environmental impacts.

ADUs can offer lower-cost housing to meet the needs of current and future residents in our neighborhoods while respecting architectural character. As household needs change, ADUs provide flexibility for extended family to be near one another while maintaining privacy and give homeowners more options for aging in place in their

neighborhood. Because they do not require paying for land, major new infrastructure, structured parking, or elevators, ADUs can be a more affordable type of home to construct and can provide living space well suited for couples, small families, friends, young people, and seniors.

Allowing ADUs in single-family zones also increases our stock of rental housing in high-cost neighborhoods where purchasing or renting an entire single-family home is unaffordable to many households. Most new homes in single-family zones are large and expensive. Expanding smaller housing choices in these areas lets more people enjoy the assets and opportunities of neighborhoods previously inaccessible to them.

When did we start allowing ADUs? Where are they allowed today?

ADUs have been allowed citywide as part of a single-family house or in the backyard of a single-family-zoned lot since 1994 and 2010, respectively. A DADU is allowed only on lots at 4,000 square feet in area.

How many ADUs do we have today?

As of November 2017, Seattle has 1,568 AADUs and 549 DADUs either constructed or permitted. This [web map](#) shows the location of permitted ADUs.

Why study reductions to the minimum lot size requirement?

Setting a minimum lot size and prohibiting creation of DADUs on smaller lots restrict their potential development. While someone may want to allow DADUs only on larger lots in order to limit density in single-family zones or maintain compatibility with existing development, many available tools — like maximum size, height, lot coverage, and setback requirements — can allow DADUs

compatible with the neighborhood even on smaller lots. Our ADU policy has always included these standards, and together they limit the size of DADUs, including if we allowed them on smaller lots.

Are you changing lot coverage?

None of the action alternatives we are studying includes changes to the current maximum lot coverage limit for single-family zones. Lot coverage is established in [Section 23.44.010.C](#) of the Seattle Municipal Code:

for lots 5,000 square feet and larger

35 percent of lot area

for lots under 5,000 square feet

1,000 square feet + 15 percent of lot area

The house, including an AADU if it has one, and any accessory structures, including a DADU and/or detached garage, all count towards this lot coverage limit.

The action alternatives will consider changes to the maximum rear yard coverage. Rear yard coverage is an additional standard that applies in single-family zones. Development must meet comply with both the lot coverage and rear yard coverage limits. The rear yard is a [specified part of the lot](#), 25 feet from the rear property line in most cases. Structures are allowed to cover at most 40 percent of the rear yard. The EIS will study increasing that limit to 60 percent only for one-story DADUs. This change could make it easier for people to build DADUs for people with limited mobility or disabilities or who cannot go upstairs.

Even with that change, any development proposal — whether a DADU, a house, or a redevelopment of the entire lot — would have to comply with the (unchanged) lot coverage limit and, additionally, whatever modified rear yard coverage limit the City adopts.

How can a 1,000-square-foot DADU on a 3,200-square-foot be allowed if you aren't changing the lot coverage limit?

The maximum size limit sets an upper bound on the largest possible DADU someone can create, but it doesn't guarantee that a DADU of that size is allowed on every lot. A proposal to build a DADU must comply with *all* standards, including lot coverage, height, and setback requirements. Depending on the size of the lot and existing structures, these standards could mean only a smaller DADU is possible, or could even render a DADU infeasible altogether.

Are we going to end up with everything in Alternative 1 or everything in Alternative 2?

Not necessarily. An EIS offers an opportunity to identify potential impacts from a range of scenarios. But in crafting our eventual final proposal, we don't have to choose one alternative or the other. In our Final EIS, we will evaluate a Preferred Alternative that can incorporate elements from different alternatives studied in the Draft EIS.

How is a single-family home with an ADU different from a duplex?

An ADU is similar to a duplex in that it offers a separate living space. Unlike duplexes, ADUs are allowed in single-family zones, but several restrictions apply. ADUs are auxiliary to and smaller than the allowable size for a principal unit. Ownership of principal unit and its ADU cannot be separated through subdivision—a process allowed in multifamily zones. Further, for the purposes of occupancy limits, principal and accessory units are together considered a single *household*, which means at most eight unrelated people can live on a lot in a single-family zone under current rules.

If we remove the owner-occupancy requirement, won't single-family zones become multifamily zones?

Several key differences distinguish single-family and multifamily zones. In our multifamily zones, we permit a wider range of housing types (duplexes, triplexes, apartments),

allow larger and taller development, and let someone subdivide land to create smaller lots. Both ownership and rental housing are allowed in single-family and multifamily zones. In multifamily zones, many rowhouse, townhouse, condominium units are rented. In single-family zones, we already allow all houses without ADUs to be rented and do not require the owner to live on the property.