



Seattle

Accessory Dwelling Units

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Best Practice Architecture / Sozinho Imagery

This 2024 ADU Annual Report presents information about outcomes and trends in permitting of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in 2024. It is our fourth annual report since Seattle overhauled its ADU regulations in 2019 and launched ADUniverse in 2020. It comes as we enter a new era of housing choice throughout Seattle neighborhoods due to implementation of new Neighborhood Residential (NR) zoning to fulfill state requirements for ADUs and middle housing.

How we got here

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are smaller, secondary dwellings in residential zones. They can take many forms: a standalone cottage, a garage apartment, or a suite within or attached to the primary residence. Seattle regulates two types of ADUs:

- An **attached ADU (AADU)** is an ADU located within or connected to a principal dwelling unit.
- A **detached ADU (DADU)** is an ADU in a separate accessory structure, typically in the rear yard of the property.

AADUs and DADUs often go by other names, like in-law units or backyard cottages, respectively.

Seattle has allowed ADUs since the mid-1990s, following passage of the Washington Housing Policy Act, and began permitting DADUs citywide in 2010. After several years of anemic production, the City Council in 2014 called for strategies to remove barriers

to ADUs, eventually leading to the 2019 legislation that reformed Seattle’s ADU regulations. Those reforms addressed key regulatory barriers to ADU production in NR zones: allowing two ADUs per lot, increasing their maximum height and size, and removing off-street parking and owner-occupancy requirements. As part of Ordinance 125854, Council directed the Executive to report annually on citywide ADU permitting, outcomes, benefits, and impacts, with the final report due in 2025.

In 2020, the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) launched **ADUniverse**, a centralized resource with guidance, pre-approved designs, and property information to demystify and accelerate the ADU process for residents.

These measures helped catalyze a substantial jump in ADU production, from 283 units permitted in 2019, the year regulatory reforms took effect, to more than 900 annually in 2022-2024. In 2019, two single-family homes were built for every ADU. Now, the inverse is true, with ADUs outpacing single-family construction two-to-one.

While Seattle’s reforms were best-in-class in 2019, other cities quickly followed suit, with the Washington Legislature adopting statewide requirements closely mirroring the City of Seattle’s policy framework in 2023 through House Bill 1337. Those new state requirements were implemented locally in May 2025 through **Ordinance 127211** and are now in effect.

Other changes are also unfolding in Seattle’s low-density residential zones. NR zones — areas formerly called Single Family, where most ADUs are produced — have been updated to allow expanded middle housing choices in response to the state’s middle housing legislation, House Bill 1110. We expect a greater number and wider variety of homes to be built through Seattle neighborhoods in the coming years and look ahead to this future in the conclusion of this report.

What’s in this report

With these new regulations on the horizon, this report describes outcomes and trends in ADU production for 2024. We summarize overall ADU permitting activity; illustrate where these homes have been built; characterize trends in the form, type, and tenure of new ADUs; present data on usage of our pre-approved DADU plans; and discuss usage of ADUs as short-term rentals. We conclude with a look ahead as we anticipate a shift toward more diverse and varied housing creation throughout Seattle neighborhoods.

Our annual reports draw on several data sources to gain insights into ADU production and outcomes:

Exhibit 1 Data sources

Data source	Description	What we can learn from it
Accela	Construction permit data from Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI)	Quantity and location of AADU and DADU permits issued in 2024 and historically
Short-term rental licenses	Business licenses required for operating a short-term rental in Seattle. Issued by the City's Finance and Administrative Services Department (FAS)	What share of Seattle's short-term rental units might be ADUs
King County Department of Assessments	Parcel-level property information that identifies condominiums	How many ADUs are offered for ownership as condominium units

ADU types

The 2019 legislation unlocked a greater variety of ADU types and configurations in NR zones that we now track in our annual reporting:

- Some ADUs continue to be single units added in a backyard or created within an existing home, though this more traditional project type is less common today.
- Many projects lie at the other end of the continuum — full-site rebuilds where the existing house is demolished, and in its place a new primary residence, AADU, and DADU are constructed.
- Though legally allowed, homes with two AADUs are rare, probably due to construction code requirements in the Seattle Building Code (SBC), like sprinklers and fire separation between units, that creation of a three-dwelling structure triggers.

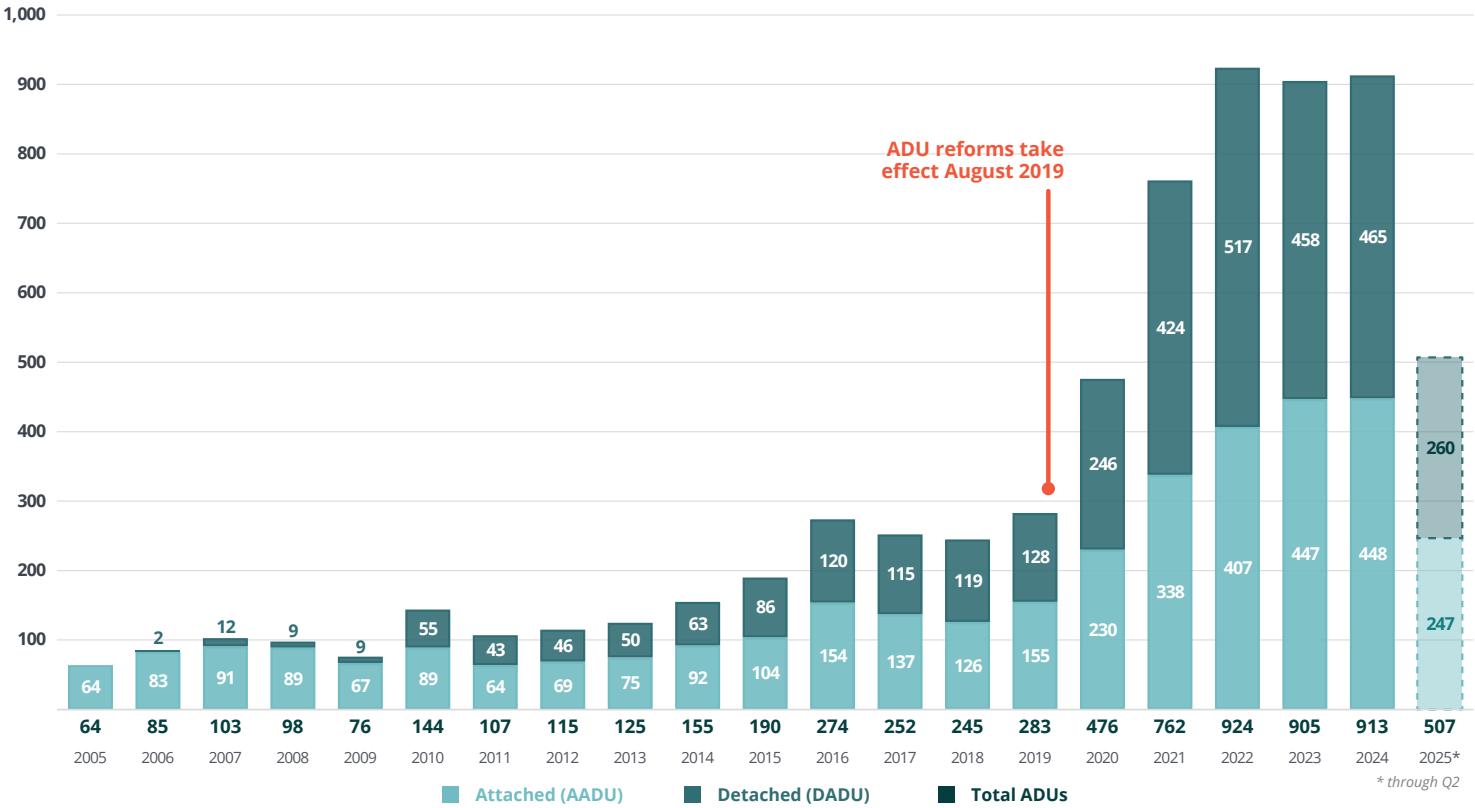
While ADUs within a home traditionally arose through conversion of a basement or upper floor into a dwelling unit, today we observe many AADUs with minimal connection to the principal unit, a configuration that makes the AADU appear as “almost detached” as possible. This phenomenon — playfully dubbed “skybridge houses” or “homes with umbilical cords” — was featured in a [New York Times](#) story in July 2025.



Artisans Group Architecture and Planning

The 2019 ADU reform legislation helped catalyze a marked increase in ADU production. Permits doubled between 2018 and 2020, the full years immediately preceding and following regulatory reform. Since then, ADU permitting has remained relatively stable, with more than 900 ADU permits issued annually from 2022 to 2024. (Data from the first half of the year suggests 2025 is on track to meet or slightly exceed those totals.) **Exhibit 2** shows ADU production by ADU type since 2005. Given the downward trend observed in other housing types during this period, due to high

Exhibit 2 ADUs permitted since 2005



interest rates, supply chain challenges, and rising construction costs, this apparent plateau may in fact represent ADUs remaining popular and viable despite headwinds facing other segments of the housing market. That said, applications for **ADU permits are currently down** 32 percent year-over-year, as is permit intake for other housing types in NR zones, suggesting these factors may finally be having an effect on the ADU production pipeline.

Exhibit 3 shows ADU permits issued in 2024 by zone. Most ADUs continue to be permitted in NR zones, with nine percent occurring in Residential Small Lot (RSL) zones and a handful elsewhere. ADUs are allowed in Lowrise zones, though historically a size limit of 650 square feet has applied, likely decreasing their viability within new townhouse and rowhouse development.

Exhibit 3 ADUs permitted in 2024 by zone

	NR1	NR2	NR3	RSL	LR	Other zone	Total
AADU	0	77	292	59	4	16	448
DADU	0	101	331	23	1	9	465
Total	0 0%	178 19%	623 68%	82 9%	5 1%	25 3%	913 100%

While many ADUs in 2024 continued the trend of full-site redevelopments (i.e., two ADUs and new house as a single project), the data show other configurations too. For example, because the 2019 legislation allowed two ADUs on all lots in NR zones, we occasionally see an ADU permitted on a property that already had one. **Exhibit 4** shows the number of ADUs permitted in 2024 based on whether the site had a pre-existing ADU.

Exhibit 4 ADUs permitted in 2024 in NR zones by number of ADUs per lot

	Number of ADUs	Percentage of total
Lots without a pre-existing ADU	780	98%
1 AADU	167	21%
1 DADU	249	31%
2 AADUs	32	4%
AADU and DADU	330	41%
>1 DADU	2	0%
Lots with a pre-existing ADU	18	2%
1 AADU	5	1%
1 DADU	13	2%
Total ADUs in NR zones	798	100%

Exhibit 5 presents overall development activity in NR zones, comparing permits for ADUs on their own, ADUs accompanied by a new detached home, and detached homes on their own. (Detached homes are called Single Family Residence or SFR in our permitting data.) Notably, projects composed solely of new detached homes — with no ADUs included — constituted just 10 percent of new homes added in NR zones in 2024, even less than the 12 percent we reported for 2023. Much more common in 2024 were projects with a mix of ADUs and detached homes (which accounted for 60 percent of new homes in NR) and ADU-only projects (34 percent).

Exhibit 5 Development in NR zones in 2024 by number of ADUs and SFRs permitted per site

	Development sites	Percentage of total	Units permitted			
			AADU	DADU	SFR	Total units
ADUs alone	353	52%	123	258	-	381
1 AADU	96	14%	96	-	-	96
1 DADU	229	33%	-	229	-	229
2 AADUs	0	0%	-	-	-	-
AADU and DADU	27	4%	27	27	-	54
>1 DADU	1	0%	-	2	-	2
ADUs with SFRs	263	38%	246	171	265	682
1 AADU	76	11%	76	-	77	153
1 DADU	33	5%	-	33	33	66
2 AADUs	16	2%	32	-	17	49
AADU and DADU	138	20%	138	138	138	414
SFRs alone	68	10%	-	-	71	71

Exhibit 6 categorizes ADU permits issued in 2024 by lot size. The median lot size for sites with permitted AADU was 5,905 square feet and for a permitted DADU 6,002 square feet.

Exhibit 6 ADUs permitted in 2024 by lot size

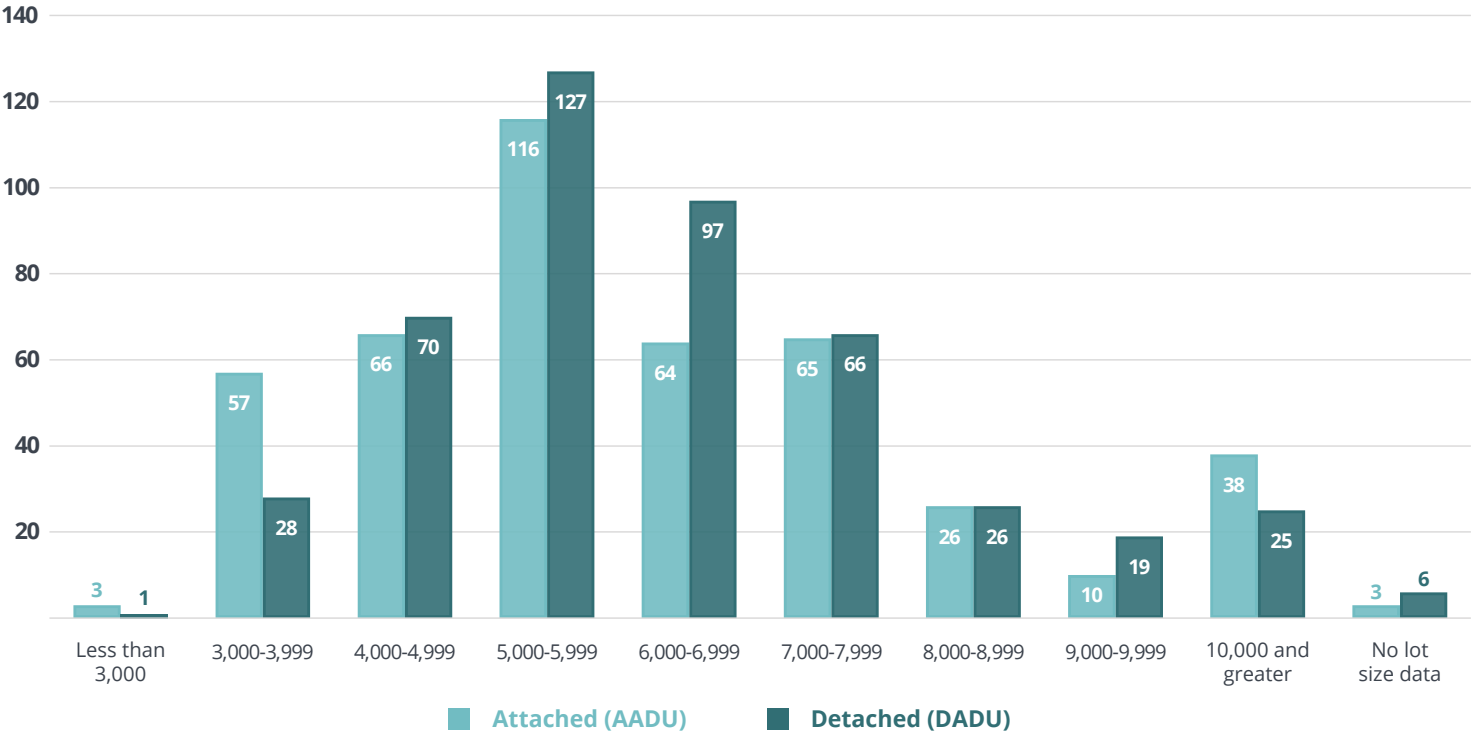
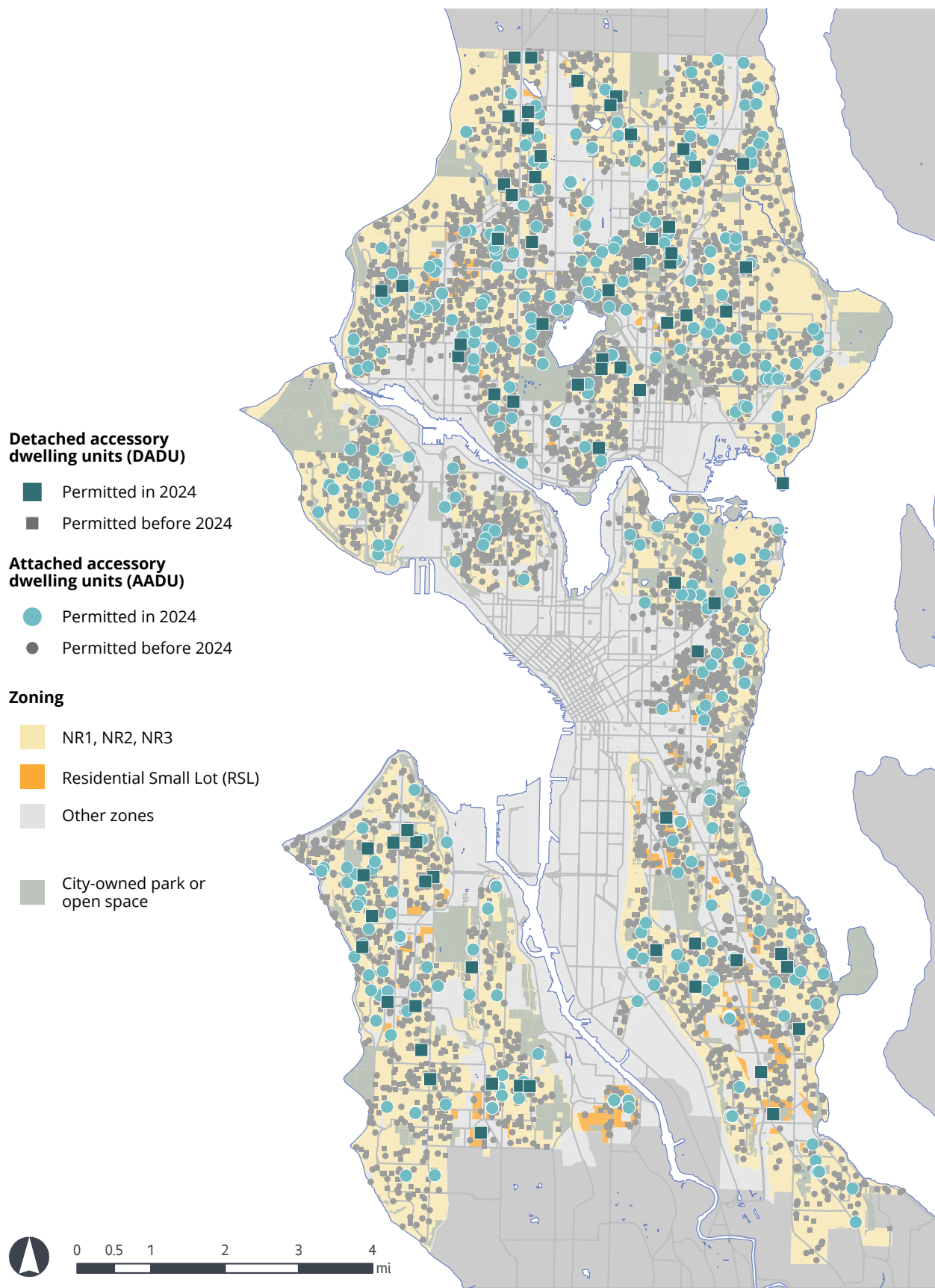


Exhibit 7 shows the distribution of ADU permits throughout Seattle, highlighting those issued in 2024.

Exhibit 7 Distribution of ADU permits throughout Seattle





PRE-APPROVED PLANS

Fivedot Architects

When ADUniverse launched in 2020, it included a gallery of pre-approved DADU designs chosen through a competitive selection process. The gallery includes an array of DADU styles and sizes, all reviewed for compliance with structural and energy codes. Property owners who choose to use them can benefit from a faster permitting pathway. To create the pre-approved DADU plans, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) used an existing process, outlined in Tip 310, to establish Standard Plans.

Exhibit 8 shows that, since their approval in 2020, these designs have been permitted 199 times as of October 2025, including 38 permits issued in 2024. Median permitting time for small-scale projects like DADUs is typically around 160 days.

Recently, other designers have created additional DADU Standard Plans, apart from those we chose from 165 submissions in 2020. This reinforces the potential value of expedited and more predictable design options.

Exhibit 8 Pre-approved DADU permit timelines

Year	Permits issued	Average intake to issuance (days)	Average in SDCI review (days)	Average out for correction (days)	Average number of correction cycles
2020	4	31	19	12	2.3
2021	42	56	38	18	2.6
2022	57	57	39	19	2.6
2023	49	64	42	22	2.8
2024	38	61	40	22	2.8



HOW ADUs ARE USED

Sheri Newbold / live-work-play

Short-term rentals

A short-term rental (STR) is a lodging use offered to guests for fewer than 30 consecutive nights. Seattle adopted regulations in 2017 that limit individuals to operating one unit as an STR, or two units if one is the operator's primary residence. An ADU can be used as an STR, but if a property owner has two ADUs and lives in the main house, they cannot use both ADUs as STRs. STR operators must obtain a license from the City's Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) department. Any ADUs used for short- or long-term rental must also register with the City's **Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO)** program.

FAS data on STR licensing offers insights into the frequency with which ADUs are offered for short-term rental. When applying for an STR license, operators must indicate their unit type. **Exhibit 9** shows the number of active STR licenses by unit type compared with the total number of ADUs permitted since 1994. Roughly 11 percent of ADUs permitted citywide are associated with an active STR license. Likewise, about 16 percent of all active STR licenses in Seattle are for ADU unit types.

This method of analysis may overestimate ADU usage as STRs in two ways. First, we calculate the share of ADUs used as STRs assuming all licenses with "other" selected for unit type in the FAS dataset are potential ADUs, a result that could occur if operators are unsure how to categorize their unit. Second, an active license does not tell us how often a unit is offered as a short-term rental. Anecdotal

information and **survey data** suggest that owners commonly use their ADU for multiple purposes, like housing for family or visitors, and may switch between short- and long-term rental depending on needs and preferences. That said, unlicensed STRs by definition would not show up in the dataset, which could lead to an undercount to the extent ADUs are offered on platforms like Airbnb without a license.

Exhibit 9 Short-term rental licenses associated with ADU housing types

Short-term rental licenses		ADU production (1994-2024)		STRs as share of ADU permits issued
Unit type	Active licenses with active units	ADU type	ADUs in issued permits	
AADU	456	AADU	4,062	11%
DADU	201	DADU	2,967	7%
Other	97			
Total	754	All ADUs	7,029	11%

Condominiums

A condominium is a form of ownership where a property is divided into units owned individually, with common elements and/or spaces owned and governed by a condominium association (i.e., a homeowners association or HOA). Seattle’s development regulations generally apply uniformly irrespective of whether the property is owned fee simple, owned in common as a condominium or cooperative, or rented. Condominium formation is governed by state law and administered at the county level.

Various housing forms can be established as condominiums, including not only multifamily buildings that readers may typically associate with condos but also attached and detached housing, like ADUs. Until recent state legislation prompted Seattle and other Washington cities to allow greater density for middle housing and fee simple ownership of individual units, NR zones have been limited to one principal unit and up two ADUs per lot, with subdivision of land prohibited below certain minimum lot sizes. As a result, in recent years we have observed a growing trend of ADUs built and offered for sale as condos, the only way to provide highly demanded ownership housing on NR sites with multiple homes.

Exhibit 10 reports the number of ADUs permitted on parcel with a recorded condominium. ADU condos became more common beginning with units permitted in 2020 and increased in frequency to a peak of 58 percent for ADUs permitted in 2023. It is not only recently constructed ADUs, however, that are owned as

condominiums; some ADUs not originally created and sold as condos have since been condominiumized by their owners, with a few dozen units permitted prior to 2019 on parcels with recorded condominiums. In fact, comparison with prior annual reports documents this process over time. Our 2023 annual report, for example, reported just two ADU condos originally permitted between 1994 and 2009, while the table below includes six, and the 24 ADUs permitted in 2018 on condo parcels is revised upward in the most current data to 27.

While City permitting data is updated frequently, condo recording data from the County typically lags, leading to undercounts for the most recent year or two. Our data for 2025 certainly underestimates the rate of ADU condo creation, and 2024 is likely incomplete as well. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion may be that the 57 and 58 percent figures for ADU condos in 2022 and 2023, respectively, are representative of the frequency with which ADUs in Seattle are built and sold for sale.

Exhibit 10 ADU permits on condo parcels by year issued

Source: OPCD analysis of King County Assessor data

	AADUs			DADUs			Total ADUs		
	Units permitted	On condo parcels	Share of units	Units permitted	On condo parcels	Share of units	Units permitted	On condo parcels	Share of units
1994-2009	1,127	4	5%	32	2	22%	1,159	6	7%
2010	89	0	0%	55	0	0%	144	0	0%
2011	64	0	0%	43	3	7%	107	3	3%
2012	69	0	0%	46	1	2%	115	1	1%
2013	75	0	0%	50	2	4%	125	2	2%
2014	92	0	0%	63	4	6%	155	4	3%
2015	104	0	0%	86	6	7%	190	6	3%
2016	154	1	1%	120	6	5%	274	7	3%
2017	137	2	1%	115	10	9%	252	12	5%
2018	126	0	0%	119	14	12%	245	14	6%
2019	155	4	3%	128	23	18%	283	27	10%
2020	230	37	16%	246	80	33%	476	117	25%
2021	338	131	39%	424	213	50%	762	344	45%
2022	407	227	56%	517	299	58%	924	526	57%
2023	447	235	53%	458	286	62%	905	521	58%
2024	448	121	27%	465	167	36%	913	288	32%
2025*	247	10	4%	260	27	10%	507	37	7%

*through Q2



LOOKING AHEAD

CAST architecture / Peter Bohler Photography

This is the final annual report required by Ordinance 125854, and it comes at a time when Seattle’s rules for ADUs and middle housing are changing. As noted earlier, implementation of recent state legislation has expanded housing options in Seattle’s NR zones. House Bill 1110 requires that zoning allow at least four units on all residential lots, and each unit can be subdivided for separate fee-simple ownership. House Bill 1337 concerns flexibility for ADUs and generally requires, among other things, allowing two DADUs per lot and increasing ADU height limits to match those for a principal residence.

The City Council is in the final stages of adopting permanent legislation to implement HB 1110, and in June 2025 **new ADU rules** took effect to comply with HB 1337. With these exciting changes, more housing can expand access in Seattle neighborhoods. The Executive has also **announced further legislation** that would offer flexibility beyond the provisions required by HB 1337, such as an ADU size limit of 1,500 square feet to encourage family-sized homes and design exceptions when the principal unit is preserved.

Monitoring trends in ADUs and middle housing

These changes may also alter how many ADUs are created in the future. When they were first legalized in the 1990s, ADUs were an incremental way to introduce more housing choices in areas otherwise restricted to one detached home per lot. For decades, ADUs have been effectively the sole option for infill housing in NR zones. Between the City’s efforts to promote them and high demand

for housing and homeownership, we have seen a sharp uptick in ADU permitting, as shown in this report. Going forward, however, ADUs will no longer be the only choice available to homeowners and homebuilders seeking to add infill housing. Middle housing options like duplexes, townhouses, and small stacked flats are now allowed at greater densities citywide, and lots can be subdivided to allow straightforward fee-simple ownership of these new homes, without the need for a condominium.

Accordingly, we may see ADU permitting decline in the coming years even as overall housing production in NR zones increases. Homebuilders who have popularized the three-unit condominium developments comprising a new house, AADU, and DADU may pivot to building four principal dwellings that are similar in style and scale but are not subject to ADU-specific size limits and can be sold fee simple. For some property owners, however, ADUs may remain an attractive option, offering a simpler permitting pathway, easier access to financing, and a size and density that meets their needs. Projects with ADUs may also stay under certain permitting thresholds that trigger utility and infrastructure requirements, like costly street improvements, that can otherwise imperil the feasibility of slightly larger middle housing developments.

OPCD will continue to monitor the housing landscape in NR zones and elsewhere as we continue to implement the One Seattle Plan and strive toward abundant housing citywide.

Refreshing our tools in light of new zoning

These changes also give us the opportunity to improve the tools Seattle residents can use to understand, take advantage of, and benefit from these housing choices.

Expanded pre-approved designs

Throughout our work to promote ADUs, we have heard from homeowners who express interest in creating an ADU but are intimidated by the prospect of navigating the design and permitting process. When we launched ADUniverse in 2020 with a gallery of pre-approved designs to address this, a single DADU was the only form that made sense to include. Now, with a broader range of housing types allowed in NR zones, we are refreshing and expanding our catalog of pre-approved designs to incorporate new forms that recent zoning changes have unlocked. This could include not only more DADU designs but also double DADUs, whether joined as side-by-side units or two separate structures; stacked duplexes, which could be added in a backyard or doubled up to create four units, all within the Residential Code; or even stacked flats like fourplexes. We anticipate issuing a call for design submissions in early 2026.

We are also working on updated guidance and tools on ADUniverse to help residents understand what options are possible on their property and how they can move forward with using them.

Supporting homeowner-led development

Finally, we know that homeowners wishing to add housing to their own property often need more than streamlined permitting to overcome the many barriers they face. This is particularly true for lower- and moderate-income homeowners and homeowners of color in communities at high risk of displacement, who could benefit from the possibilities ADUs provide if supported to get there. These residents instead often feel limited to two choices: watch their neighborhood grow around them, or sell to a developer who capitalizes on their property's value. If we want these homeowners to stay and flourish as their neighborhoods grow rather than sell and leave, we need to help them participate in development if they wish to. We have two strategies underway to do this:

- First, OPCD received federal funding through a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) **PRO Housing grant** to support legacy homeowners seeking to add housing to their property. This demonstration program will offer technical assistance and pre-development support to help lower- and moderate-income homeowners, particularly in communities at high risk of displacement, overcome barriers and move forward with adding housing. Support could include design work, site planning, financial and legal guidance, pro forma creation, and permit navigation.
- Second, we are also exploring the feasibility of a potential pilot program to boost ADU production and help homeowners add housing through a co-development model. The pilot would help homeowners overcome barriers to realize their property's housing potential as a way to build wealth, achieve stability, and contribute to housing production.



For more information about ADUs in Seattle and to view interactive versions of the data contained in this report, visit **ADUniverse** at maps.seattle.gov/ADU.