

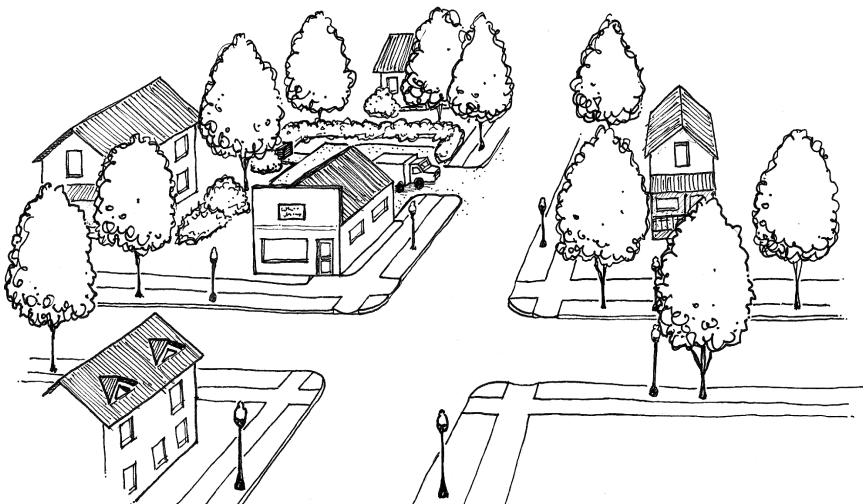
# HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRATEGIES: LAND USE STRATEGIES

## Accessory Dwelling Units

*Close to jobs, schools, services, and shopping, with plenty of sidewalks, parks, and small-town character, our residential neighborhoods offer a high quality of life for many types of families. But as our population ages and our household size dwindles, our neighborhoods may not offer enough housing choices to fit these changing demographics.*

As residents age, it may become more difficult for them to maintain their own homes. And for other small households, it can be a challenge to find affordable rental homes within the urban core, close to jobs and services.

Because ADUs are usually restricted in size, their rents are more affordable than full-size rentals, and are often of particular benefit to the elderly: these small units are sometimes used for caretakers, allowing the individuals to remain in



Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)—also known as accessory apartments, in-law apartments, granny flats, or secondary units—are a way to expand the housing supply within these neighborhoods, without diminishing their single-family character. ADUs are small rentals created on a lot with an existing home. They might be located within the home, as a detached unit, or above a garage or other accessory building.

their homes as they age. Or the units may be built to provide housing for aging parents or other family members.

ADUs work well in communities that have existing residential neighborhoods. By integrating small housing units into existing neighborhoods, ADUs help keep development compact, reducing the need to extend utilities and services. And the development of ADUs often

### Policy Pointers

- To control the size of an ADU, ordinances may place a maximum on square footage, or they may require that the ADU not exceed a percentage of the main home's footprint.
- Some ordinances may try to limit the impact to the appearance of the main home. For instance, outdoor staircases may be prohibited, or the ADU may be required to use existing entrances. Some regulations specify that the unit must be compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
- Regulations often require the main house to be owner-occupied. Some ordinances limit the tenure and number of people that can live in the ADU, and some require that the unit be occupied by a family member.
- To be sure that ADUs don't substantially change the overall density in a neighborhood, the number of new units may be restricted by the zoning ordinance: some requirements prohibit more than one ADU within a certain radius, and some put a cap on the number of ADU permits that are granted each year.

## ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS In Practice

- **The Village of Empire** allows accessory dwelling units as a use by right in their Village Residential District. Accessory dwellings can't exceed the square footage of the first floor of the main home, and the design can't detract from the single family character of the residence and the neighborhood. The ordinance also requires that, when viewed from the outside, it shall appear that only one household occupies the site. One additional parking space is required for each accessory unit.
- **The Village of Suttons Bay** allows accessory dwellings, up to 600 square feet in size, on any parcel, as long as the owner of the parcel lives on the property. Accessory dwellings must comply with all height, setback, and maximum impervious surface coverage requirements of the zoning ordinance. One additional parking space is allowed for an accessory unit.

encourages the rehabilitation of older homes.

In addition to providing affordable rentals, these units can lower housing costs for property owners, too: rental income from the ADU can offset the owner's mortgage payments.

Policy changes allowing ADUs can create controversy in a community, often over concerns about increased density. Other worries include those over the perceived impacts of rental housing on neighborhood character, traffic, and property values. Many studies have shown that neither rental housing nor affordable housing contribute to increases in crime and traffic or decline in property values, but these concerns often arise in communities considering changes that would allow ADUs or other types of affordable housing. Regulations can respond to these fears in part by controlling the size, design, and number of ADUs in the community.

As our demographics shift nationwide, it's important for our communities to allow housing types that fit our changing



needs. While ADU regulations may not create a large number of new housing units, they can provide a valuable alternative for the growing numbers of aging residents and small households in our communities.

## Regulatory Barriers To Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units often aren't allowed in residential districts. And when they *are* allowed, they may be permitted only as a conditional use, subject to lengthy review procedures and stringent design standards. The extra time and standards involved can raise the costs of design and construction, and may prevent some homeowners from pursuing the possibility of an ADU on their property.

*Housing Policy & Outreach in Antrim-Benzie-Grand Traverse-Kalkaska-Leelanau Counties*

  
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Community Housing Choices is a New Designs for Growth program intended to further the housing policies of the *New Designs for Growth Guidebook*, and is administered by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG). The goal of Community Housing Choices is to ensure sufficient housing choices for the region's workforce, using education, collaboration, and advocacy to promote the adoption of land use and economic tools that will contribute to livable, vibrant communities. Community Housing Choices is designed to assist governments, nonprofits, developers, businesses, and citizens initiate proactive housing strategies in our communities.

This series of best practice resources serves as an extension of housing policies identified in the *New Designs for Growth Guidebook*. For more information on the *Guidebook*, please visit the website at [www.newdesignsforgrowth.com](http://www.newdesignsforgrowth.com), or call (231) 929-5000.

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