



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL  
CENTRAL STAFF

# ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS: FLOOR AREA RATIO AND OWNER OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENTS

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SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
MAY 7, 2019 (CORRECTED PAGES 14 & 15 ON MAY 8, 2019)

# What are Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)?

*small, secondary units associated with a single-family home*

## Detached ADUs (DADUs)

backyard cottages



carriage house



## Attached ADUs (AADUs)

garden apartments  
basement suite



# Why encourage ADUs?

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Increase the number and variety of housing choices in single-family zones

More affordable than single-family homes, which most people cannot afford.

Allow homeowners to generate supplemental income and adapt to their changing household needs.

ADUs allowed since 1994,  
but **less than two percent**  
of Seattle properties  
have an ADU.



**579 backyard cottages** and **1,592**  
**in-law units** among **135,000** lots in  
single-family zones.

# Timeline

Attached ADUs allowed citywide

1994

2007

2010

Backyard cottages (DADUs) piloted in southeast Seattle

DADUs allowed citywide

2014

2016

Council adopts Resolution 31547 requesting analysis of policy changes to increase ADUs

**MAY 2016**

OPCD issues Determination of Non-Significance (DNS)

**DECEMBER 2016**

Hearing Examiner decision directs the City to prepare an EIS

2018

**MAY 2018**

Council issues Draft EIS

**OCTOBER 2018**

Council issues Final EIS

2019

**MARCH 2019**

Appeal Hearing

Council considers legislation to amend Land Use Code

# Summary of the Proposed Changes

Remove or reduce various regulatory barriers that prevent or discourage homeowners from creating ADUs

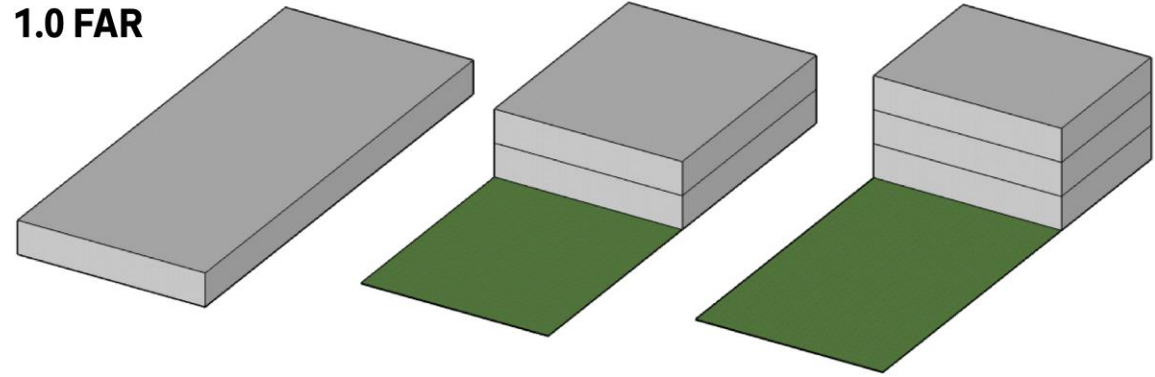
- Allow two ADUs on one lot
- Remove the off-street parking requirement
- Allow DADUs on lots of at least 3,200 square feet
- **Remove the owner-occupancy requirement**
- Increase maximum households size to 12 unrelated people on lots with two ADUs
- Allow DADUs of up to 1,000 square feet, the same size currently allowed for AADUs
- Increase DADU height limits by 1-2 feet, with flexibility for green building strategies
- Provide flexibility for one-story DADUs accessible to people with disabilities or limited mobility, with limitations on tree removal
- **Use FAR to limit the size of new single-family homes and encourage ADUs**

# What is Floor Area Ratio (FAR)?

Floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of a building's total square footage (floor area) to the size of the piece of land on which it is constructed.

## Illustrations of FAR Limits

### 1.0 FAR

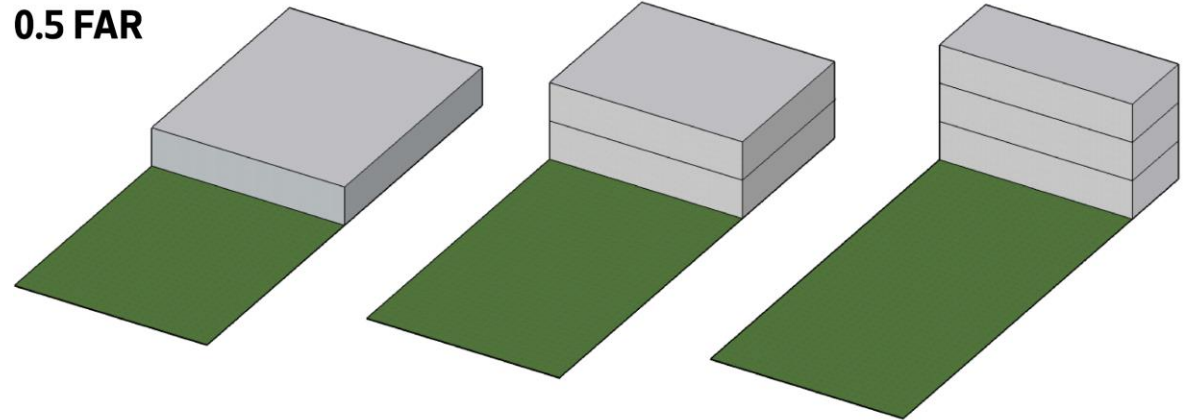


**1 story**  
(100% lot coverage)

**2 stories**  
(50% lot coverage)

**3 stories**  
(33% lot coverage)

### 0.5 FAR



**1 story**  
(50% lot coverage)

**2 stories**  
(25% lot coverage)

**3 stories**  
(17% lot coverage)

# Proposed FAR Limit

- Maximum of 0.5 FAR, or 2,500 square feet, whichever is greater
- Exempt:
  - Floor-area below grade (i.e. basements)
  - Any floor area in an ADU
- Existing homes that exceed the limit can expand one time by 20%





## Below proposed maximum FAR

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ZONE	SF 5000
YEAR BUILT	1954
SIZE	~1,900 square feet
FAR	.35



## At proposed maximum FAR

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ZONE	SF 5000
YEAR BUILT	1925
SIZE	~2,500 square feet
FAR	.50



## Above proposed maximum FAR

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ZONE	SF 5000
YEAR BUILT	2014
SIZE	~2,700 square feet
FAR	.63



## Above proposed maximum FAR

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ZONE	SF 5000
YEAR BUILT	2017
SIZE	~5,400 square feet
FAR	1.05

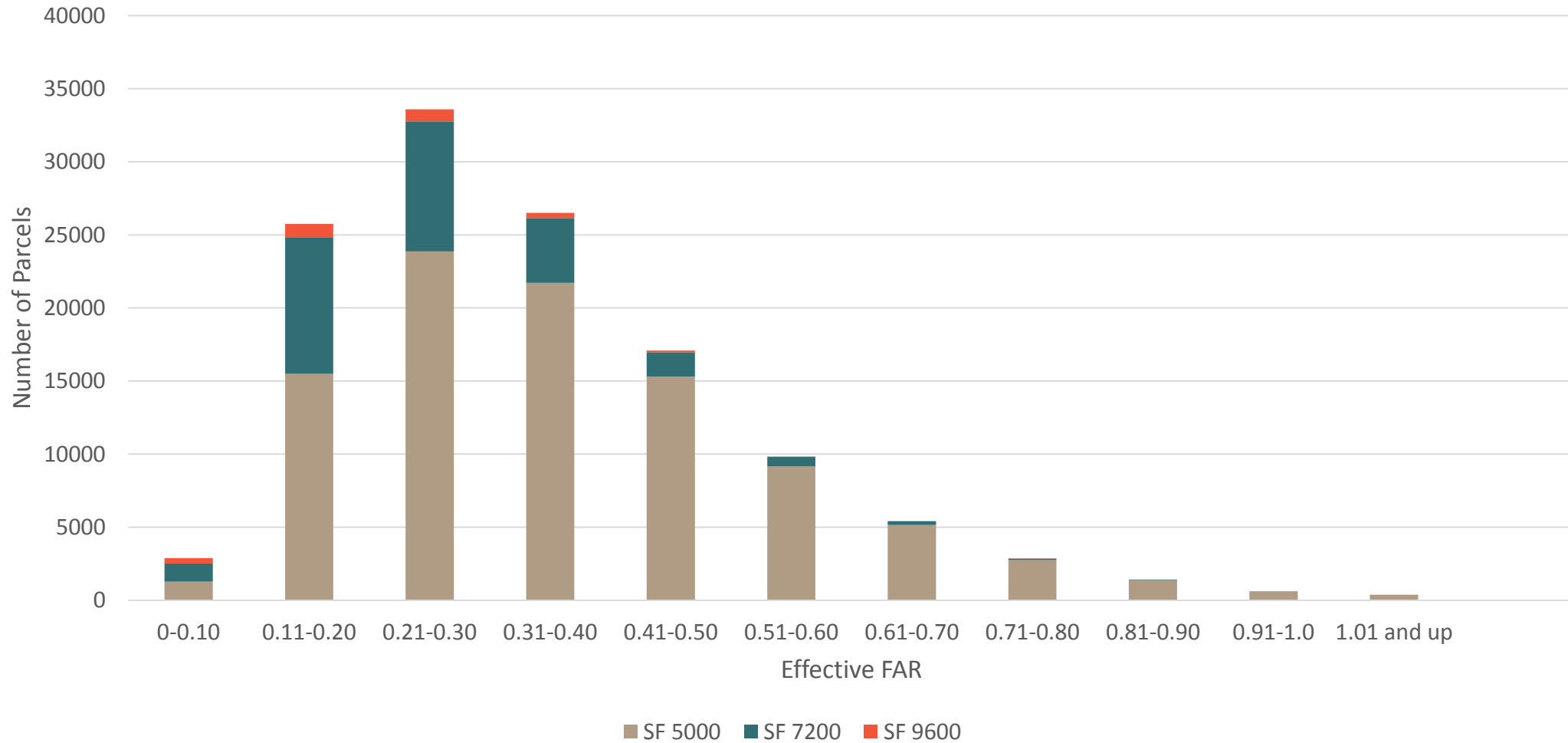


Above proposed maximum FAR – would be permitted if two AADUs are included

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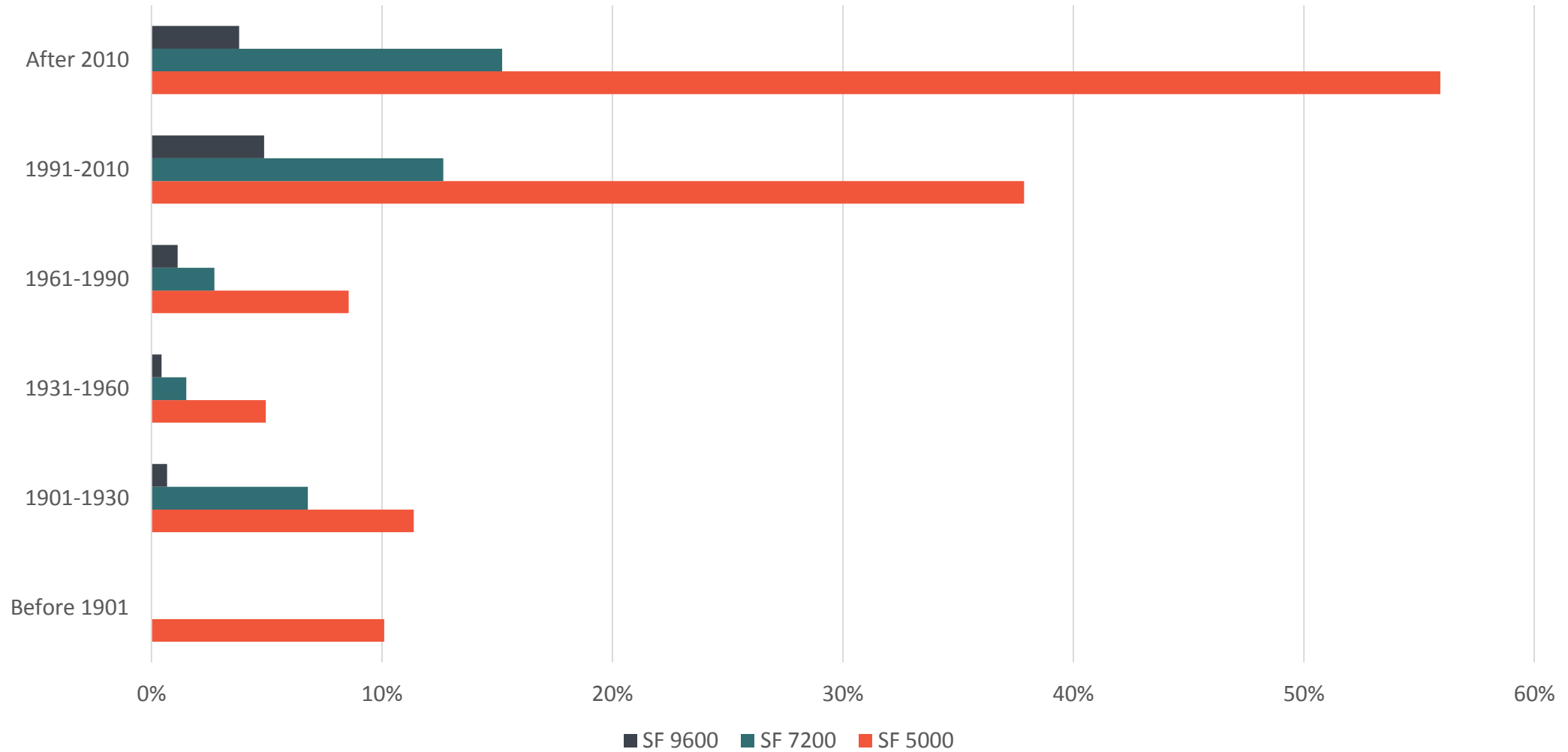
ZONE	SF 5000
YEAR BUILT	2016
SIZE	~4,500 square feet

# Parcels by FAR\*



\*Revised on 5/8 to reflect data through 2019 and to correct a calculation error.

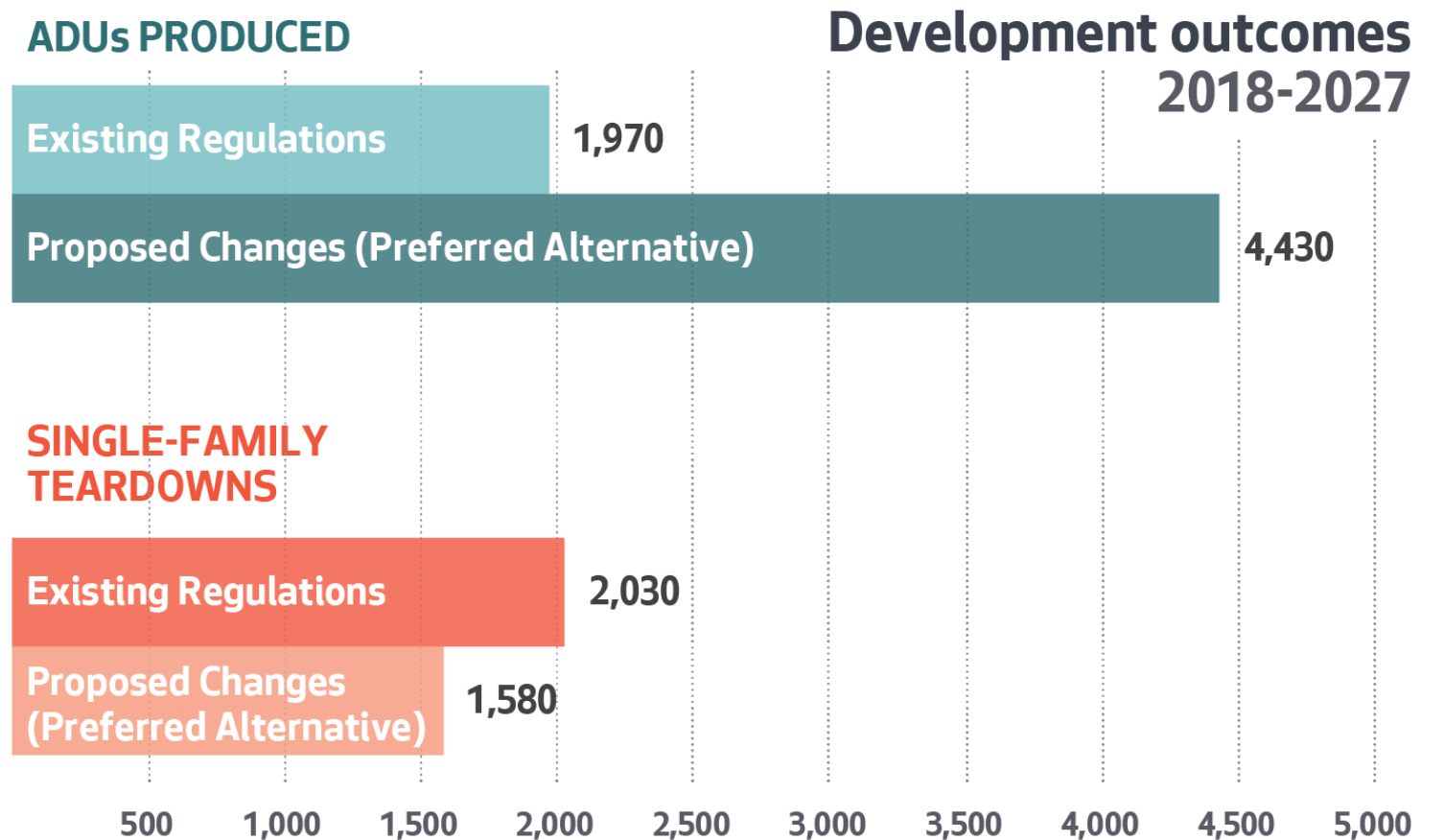
### Percent of Parcels that would Exceed the Proposed FAR Limit, by year built\*



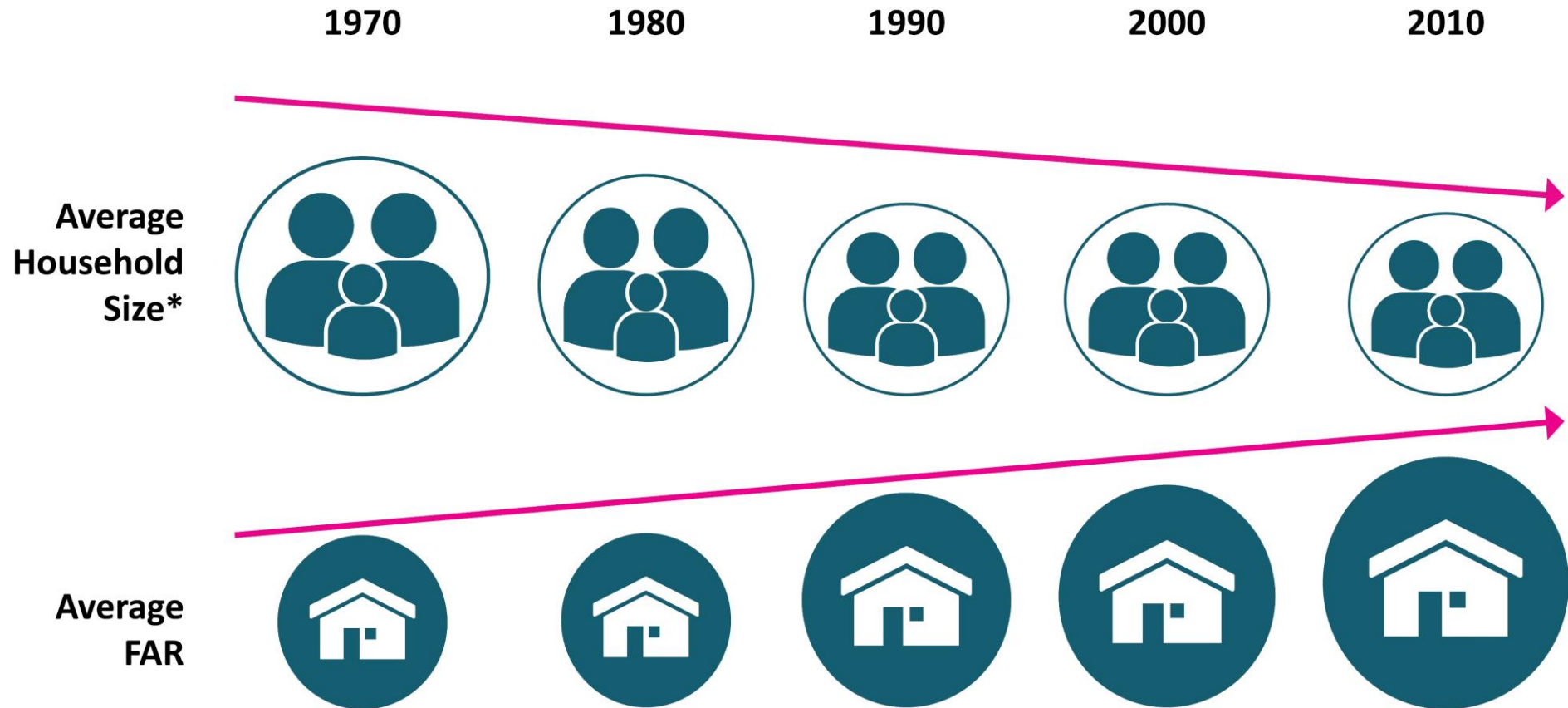
\*Revised on 5/8 to reflect data through 2019 and to correct a calculation error.

# Why implement FAR limits in Single-family Zones

- Increase ADU production
- Reduce teardowns
- Scale of new development







*\*Note: According to 5-year ACS estimates, average household size in Seattle is growing, from 2.05 people per household in the 2007-2011 estimates to 2.12 people per household in 2012-2016 estimates. This represents what may be a reversal of the trend prior to 2010, when average household size had been falling.*

# Policy Options: FAR Limit

1. No action (do not introduce FAR limits);
2. Adopt 0.5 FAR limit, as proposed in the Preferred Alternative;
3. Adopt FAR limits that are higher than 0.5; or
4. Expand or reduce the floor area that would be exempt from the FAR limit (i.e. do not exempt floor area in ADUs, or exempt floor area in all accessory structures, such as garages).

*Note: Option four could be combined with option two or three.*

# Owner-occupancy requirement

## Current regulations

- + A property owner must occupy either the main house or the ADU for six months of the year

## Proposed changes

- + Would remove the owner-occupancy requirement
- + A property owner could add an ADU to their rental property

## *Why consider removing the owner-occupancy requirement?*

- + **Increased ADU production:** approximately 20 percent of lots in single-family zones are renter occupied; ADUs are not allowed on these lots under existing regulations
- + **Flexibility:** prohibition on moving, renting house and ADU deters some owners
- + **Financing:** frequently cited as a barrier, either real or perceived, to secure financing
- + **Equity:** current regulation treats owners and renters differently

# Policy concerns:

## Will proposed changes accelerate speculation and displacement?

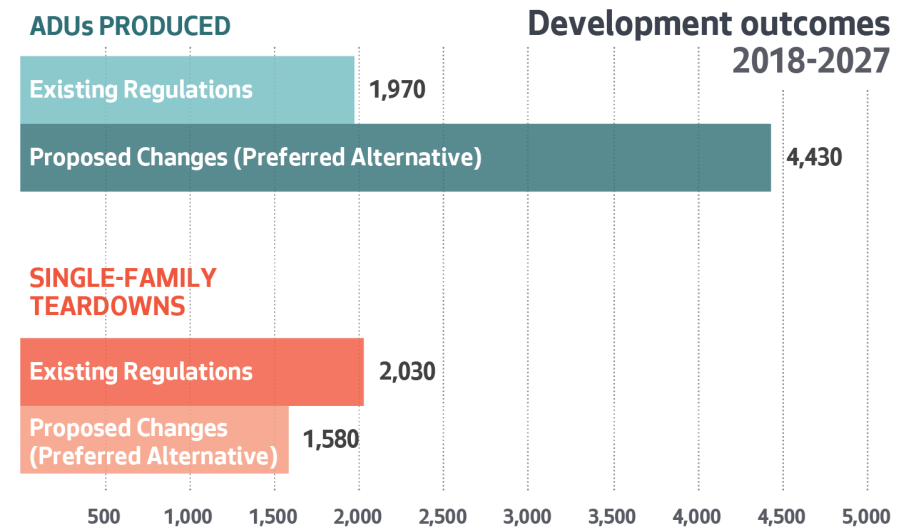
### Key Questions in the EIS Analysis:

#### Underlying Development Economics

How might the proposed changes alter the underlying real-estate economics in single-family zones? Could the proposed changes make property in single-family zones more attractive as rental investments rather than as owner-occupied assets?

#### ADU Production

How many ADUs could be created given the proposed policy changes in each alternative?



# Policy Options: Owner Occupancy Requirement

1. No action (do not eliminate the owner occupancy requirement)
2. Eliminate the owner occupancy requirement
3. Eliminate the owner occupancy requirement; require continuous ownership for a minimum of one year prior to permitting an ADU
4. Eliminate the owner occupancy requirement; adopt an incentive zoning program for the second ADU. This could include:
  - a) Adopting an incentive zoning approach that would only allow a second ADU if one of the units on the lot is a rent- and income restricted unit; or
  - b) Adopting an incentive zoning approach that would only allow a second ADU if it meets certain green building requirements.

# Next Steps

2019 Date	Topic
Tuesday, May 7	Discussion on FAR limits and removal of the owner occupancy requirement
Wednesday, May 29 (special meeting of the S&T committee)	Briefing and discussion on proposed legislation
Tuesday, June 11 (special evening meeting of the S&T committee)	Public Hearing on the proposed legislation
Tuesday, June 18	Discussion and possible vote on amendments and proposed legislation

# Thank you

More information available at [seattle.gov/council/ADU-EIS](https://seattle.gov/council/ADU-EIS).

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