Accessory Dwelling Units
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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City of Seattle

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Acknowledgments

Nick Welch	Office of Planning and Community Development
Mike Podowski	Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections
Jennifer Pettyjohn	Office of Planning and Community Development
Scott Domansky	Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections
Arthur Acolin	University of Washington

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



Seattle
Office of Planning &
Community Development



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

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Executive summary

In 2019, Seattle reformed its rules for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and removed several regulatory barriers that had discouraged or prevented property owners from creating this type of housing. The following year, we launched **ADUniverse**, a one-stop online home for information and resources about designing and permitting an ADU.

Since then, ADU production in Seattle has increased substantially. Last year, the City issued nearly 1,000 ADU permits, more than four times the number permitted in 2018 before the new rules were in place.

When it adopted those rules, the City Council directed the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) to monitor and report annually on ADU production and outcomes. This 2022 ADU Annual Report follows **last year's report**, describes trends in the amount and location of ADUs added in 2022, and includes new information about how and by whom ADUs are being used.

In 2022, Seattle permitted 437 attached ADUs (AADUs) and 551 detached ADUs (DADUs), often called backyard cottages. Just under half were on sites with multiple ADUs, a new option unlocked through the 2019 ADU legislation. About one-third were part of a development that included a new single-family residence.

Contributing to these permits were the City's 10 pre-approved DADU plans, which offer a faster and more predictable permitting pathway for owners who license them from the designers who created them. These plans have been permitted 130 times since we launched them in September 2020.

This report includes updated and new information about how ADUs are used. City data on short-term rental licenses suggests that about 12 percent of ADUs in Seattle may be offered for nightly rentals on platforms like Airbnb and Vrbo. Analysis of City and County property records shows that about one-third of ADUs permitted in 2021 were created as part of a condominium, and sales data suggests that, due to their smaller size, ADU condos offer a lower-cost ownership option compared to new single-family residences.

Finally, this report includes results from a survey of ADU owners and occupants we conducted in 2022 in partnership with the University of Washington. Responses suggest that the large majority of ADU owners are white, have a household income above $200,000, and paid for construction with cash. ADU rents vary substantially but average well below the typical Seattle one-bedroom rent, with almost one-sixth offered for less than $1,000 per month.

1 Introduction

In 2015, the City Council adopted **Resolution 31547**, directing planning staff to identify strategies for increasing the production of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as part of a broader effort to address Seattle's housing crisis. At that time, attached ADUs (AADUs) had been allowed citywide since the mid-1990s and detached ADUs (DADUs) since 2010 — but 98 percent of Seattle's single-family lots did not have an ADU. Most property owners were passing on the opportunity to add incremental housing despite its potential benefits.

Several factors were at play, including regulations that discouraged or outright prohibited creating an ADU on many sites, a design and permitting process many homeowners found complex and daunting, and a high-cost environment for building housing with few options (like financing) for folks without wealth. In 2019, Seattle reformed its ADU rules through **Ordinance 125984**, removing several regulatory barriers that hampered production. In 2020, we launched ADUniverse, a one-stop online resource that centralizes information and offers pre-approved designs that, together, helps demystify and accelerate the process to create an ADU.

ADU production has since increased more than three and a half times since 2019. Last year, the City issued permits for 988 ADUs, the highest year on record and almost 30 percent more than 2021, the next-highest annual total. These relatively small homes offer access to neighborhoods where costs are particularly high, housing production is limited, and most homes are large, detached houses that few in our region can afford. With housing scarcity boosting prices, worsening affordability, and accelerating displacement, any increase in housing choices helps address our housing crisis.

Still, despite this success in recent years, several key questions remain. First, given estimates that Seattle's housing shortfall numbers in the tens of thousands of homes, are ADUs sufficient for increasing housing supply in residential neighborhoods, or must we do more? Second, who's benefiting most directly from the opportunity to build, own, or rent an ADU, and to what extent are they alleviating displacement pressures to help people stay in place? Third, what barriers continue to constrain ADU production, especially for households with fewer resources at their disposal?

This report explores recent trends in Seattle's ADU production to gain insights into those questions. It fulfills requirements adopted in Section 11 of **Ordinance 125984** for the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) to report annually for five years on citywide ADU permit activity and direction in **Executive Order 2019-04** to monitor and report on ADU development to identify outcomes, benefits, and impacts associated with this housing type. The following table summarizes those requirements and identifies the status of each:







What are ADUs?

ADUs are small, secondary dwellings in residential zones that can take many forms: a standalone cottage in the rear yard (top), a dwelling unit above a garage (middle), or a suite within or attached to the main house (bottom).

An **attached ADU (AADU)** is an ADU located within or connected to a principal dwelling unit.

A **detached ADU (DADU)**, sometimes called a backyard cottage, is an ADU in a separate accessory structure.

Credit (from top to bottom): live-work-play architecture / Cindy Apple Photography; Shape Architecture; Hammer & Hand

Reporting requirement	Legislative source	Status
Number of ADUs • Annual ADU production • Properties with two ADUs • ADUs as new construction or conversion • ADUs associated with SFR demoltion • ADUs permitted but not yet constructed • ADUs constructed	Ord 125984 EO 2019-04	Included in this 2022 ADU Annual Report
ADUs associated with short-term rental licenses	Ord 125984 EO 2019-04	Included in this 2022 ADU Annual Report
Descriptive statistics of ADU owners and occupants • Demographics of owners and occupants • Use • Size • Financing • Rent charged • Ownership • Design and construction of the ADU • Challenges and barriers to constructing the ADU	Ord 125984	Summary of voluntary survey of ADU owners and occupants included in Section 5 of this report
DADU and lot characteristics DADU height and gross square footage Total square footage of all structures on property Total lot coverage for property	Ord 125984	We have begun this analysis through an internship and expect to include it in our next annual report
Parking outcomes Number off-street parking spaces added Parking-related impacts Identify where ADU tenants are parking (if at all)	Ord 125984 EO 2019-04	We have an initial assessment of parking outcomes through the survey results in this report
Affordability ADU rental rates Effect of ADUs on affordability	EO 2019-04	ADU rents and sales prices included in this report
Trees and green space Tree canopy assessment by region Impacts on green space and trees	EO 2019-04	We have begun this analysis through an internship and expect to include it in a forthcoming report
Infrastructure demand Impact on need for schools, parks, infrastructure	EO 2019-04	Broader than the scope of this annual report

Removing barriers to ADUs

Seattle's 2019 legislation focused on several key regulatory barriers to ADU development. Key changes included:[1]

- Allowing two ADUs on all lots in Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones
- Reducing the minimum lot size for a DADU to 3,200 square feet
- Increasing the maximum height and size of DADUs to facilitate larger, family-size homes

1 The City also increased the household size limit for unrelated people on lots with two ADUs from eight to 12, but subsequently the Washington Legislature approved Senate Bill 5235, which barred cities from setting limits on the number of unrelated people who can comprise a household.

- Removing off-street parking and owner-occupancy requirements
- Establishing a new limit on the maximum single of single-family dwellings and incentivizing inclusion of ADUs in new development

These changes focused on regulatory barriers in the City's land use code, but other regulations affecting ADU development exist in other codes or outside the City's purview. For example, the City also worked with King County to reduce the rate that applies when a property owner adds an ADU for the sewage treatment capacity charge. The Seattle Residential Code (SRC), which prescribes construction and life safety standards that vary according to the number and configuration of units in a structure, requires that homes with two AADUs must include sprinklers. ADUs created and sold as condominium units since 2018 are governed by the Washington Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act (**RCW Chapter 64.90**).

As documented in the next section, most ADUs are permitted in Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones, but they are also allowed in Residential Small Lot (RSL) and Lowrise (LR) zones. On the following pages, Exhibit 1 totals all ADUs permitted across all zones, and Exhibit 2 breaks out production by zone. In RSL and LR zones, one ADU is allowed per principal dwelling unit, and different size limits and other standards apply.

Data sources used in this report

This annual report draws on several data sources to gain insights into ADU production and outcomes:

Data source	Description	What we can learn from it
Accela	Construction permit data from SDCI	Quantity, location, and timeline data for AADU and DADU permits issued in 2022 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).	Share of Seattle's ADUs are associated with short-term rental licenses
Survey of owners and occupants	Results from a survey disseminated in 2022 by OPCD and the University of Washington to all addresses of ADU permits issued 2016-2021	Information about the people and properties involved in ADU production beyond what's available in City permitting data, such as demographic and socioeconomic attributes of owners, financial data on rent and construction cost, and qualitative information about owners' motivations for building and use of their ADU.
Plan set review	Manual review of ADU plan sets	Characteristics and outcomes not included in permit datasets, like lot coverage; ADU size and height; amount of off-street parking provided; trees removed, retained, and planted
King County Department of Assessments	Parcel-level property information that identifies condominiums	How many ADUs are offered for ownership as condominium units, and what sales prices are associated with ADU condos

2 ADU production

After legalizing DADUs citywide in 2010, Seattle saw relatively consistent permit activity for several years. From 2010 to 2015, total ADU permitting average 136 units annually. This rose to about 264 ADUs per year from 2016 to 2019, but the trend had leveled, with nearly the same number of ADUs permitted in 2016 and 2019. Activity jumped substantially in 2020, the first full year after the City's ADU reforms took effect, and increased further in 2021 to a total of 771 permits issued, an average of more than two per day.

Exhibit 1 shows this upward trend since 2019 continuing last year with the most ADU permits issued in Seattle's history. SDCI issued permits for 437 AADUs and 551 DADUs across all zones, together a 28 percent increase from 2021 and more than four times the number of units permitted in 2018, the last full year before ADU reforms took effect. This dataset includes both ADUs with issued permits, where construction may not have begun or may be underway, and ADUs with completed or "finaled" permits where the unit is fully built.

Exhibit 2 on the following page shows ADU permits from 2022 by zone.

Exhibit 1 **ADUs permitted since 2005**

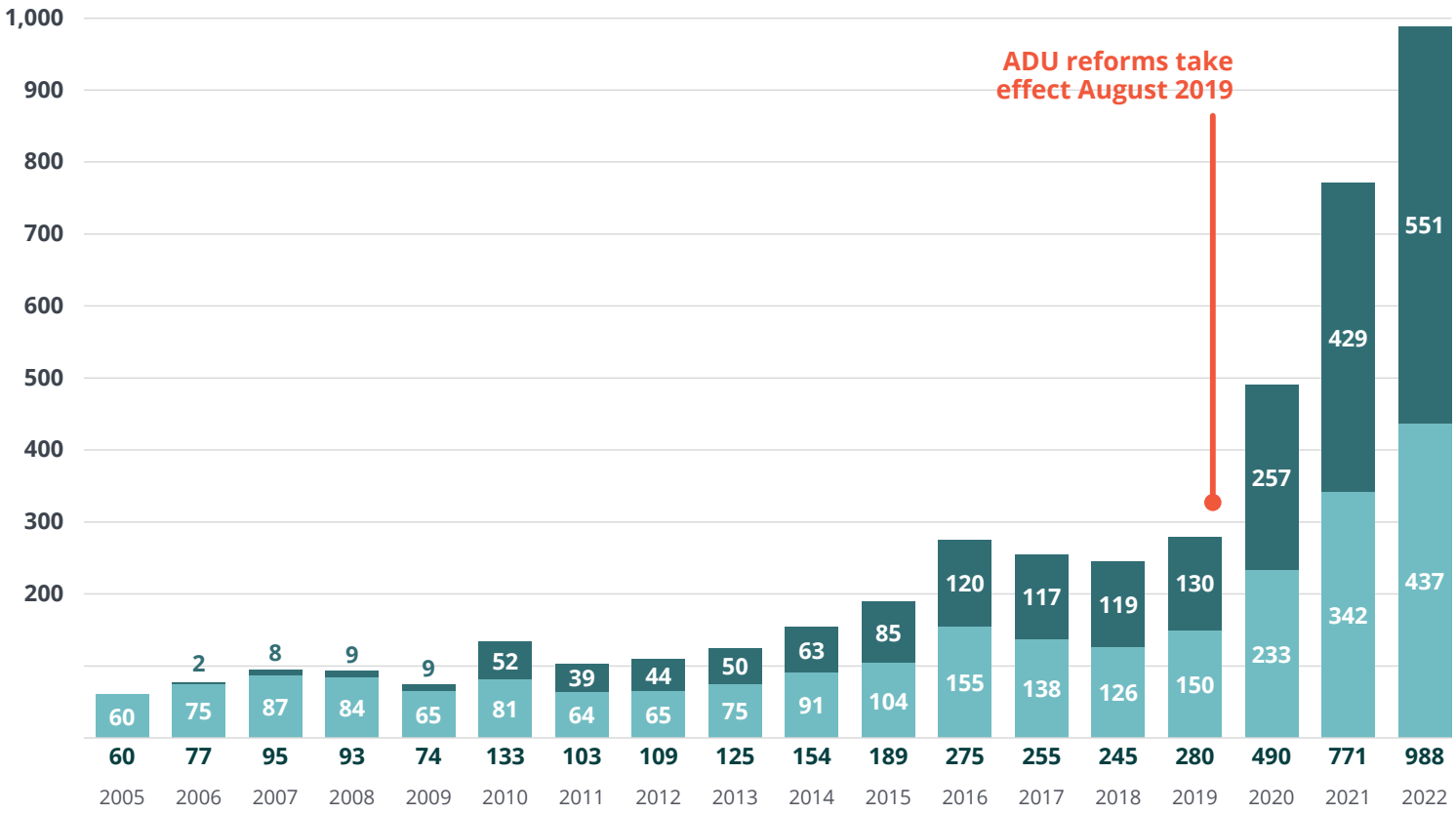


Exhibit 2 **ADUs permitted in 2022 by zone**

	NR1 / NR2 / NR3	RSL	LR	Other zone	Total
AADU	364	34	37	2	**437**
DADU	471	69	9	2	**551**
Total	**835**	**103**	**46**	**4**	**988**

Seattle's 2019 ADU reform allowed properties in NR zones to have two ADUs, either as two AADUs or an AADU and a DADU. For several reasons, a precise total for the number of sites with two ADUs can be challenging. First, units can be permitted together in a single permit or separately over a period of years. When ADUs are permitted on a site years apart, it's theoretically possible, albeit uncommon, that the older ADU was removed or converted, and the site does not in fact have two ADUs today. Second, larger development sites can comprise multiple lots, and its associated permit may have multiple principal units and/or ADUs even if each lot has only one. In general, however, we can use development sites where permits have been issued for multiple ADUs as a barometer for how common this new option is being used.

Exhibit 3 shows the number of ADUs permitted in 2022 that either 1) were part of a single development with multiple ADUs, or 2) added a second ADU to a property where one had already been permitted in the past. A total of 835 ADUs were permitted in 2022 in NR zones. (We don't include RSL or other zones in this analysis because only one ADU is allowed per principal unit there.) Overall, 42 percent of those permits included multiple units: 35 percent had an AADU and a DADU and seven percent for two AADUs. Two percent (17 ADUs) were for a single unit on a site that had an ADU permitted in the past. The remaining 56 percent were permits for a single ADU (19 percent AADU, 38 percent DADUs).

Exhibit 3 **ADUs permitted in 2022 in NR zones by number of ADUs per lot**

	Number of ADUs	Percentage of total
Lots with multiple ADUs permitted	351	42%
2 AADUs	56	7%
AADU + DADU	295	35%
Lots with a pre-existing ADU	17	2%
Lots with no pre-existing ADUs	467	56%
AADU	161	19%
DADU	319	38%
>1 DADU	4	0%
Total ADUs	**835**	**100%**

Exhibit 4 **Development sites in NR zones by number of ADUs and SFRs permitted in 2022**

	Number of development sites	Percentage of total	Units on those development sites		
			AADUs	DADUs	SFRs
ADUs without SFR	**394**	**51%**	**119**	**303**	**-**
AADU	87	11%	87	-	-
DADU	279	36%	-	279	-
AADU + DADU	24	3%	24	24	-
2 AADUs	4	1%	8	-	-
ADUs with SFR	**262**	**34%**	**245**	**168**	**267**
AADU + SFR	74	10%	74	-	75
DADU + SFR	42	5%	-	44	44
AADU + DADU + SFR	122	16%	123	124	124
2 AADUs + SFR	24	3%	48	-	24
SFR alone	**111**	**14%**			**132**
Total	**759**	**100%**	**364**	**471**	**399**

We can also identify the share of ADUs permitted in 2022 that were part of a full site redevelopment that includes a new single-family residence. In these cases, it's reasonable to assume an existing single-family dwelling was demolished as part of the redevelopment since most sites in Seattle are already developed. Exhibit 4 breaks down development sites in NR zones that had ADUs and/or single-family residences units added in 2022. About half had only ADUs added, 14 percent had only single-family residences added, and 34 percent had a combination of the two housing types. Of this last category, the most prevalent combination is a new single-family residence with an AADU and a DADU, like the example to the left.



Seventy percent new single-family homes built in 2022 included an ADU (262 of 373 sites). Only 30 percent of new SFR projects did not include an ADU. This is likely a reflection of the floor area ratio (FAR) limit established in 2019, which limited the size of new single-family homes and exempts floor area in an ADU as an incentive to include those units in new developments.

Exhibit 5 shows the distribution of ADU permits throughout Seattle, with an emphasis on those permitted in 2022. As in past years, ADU production was relatively distributed throughout Neighborhood Residential zones across the city, with some clustering in northwest Seattle (Loyal Heights and Greenwood), Madrona, and South Beacon Hill.

Exhibit 5 Distribution of ADU permits throughout Seattle

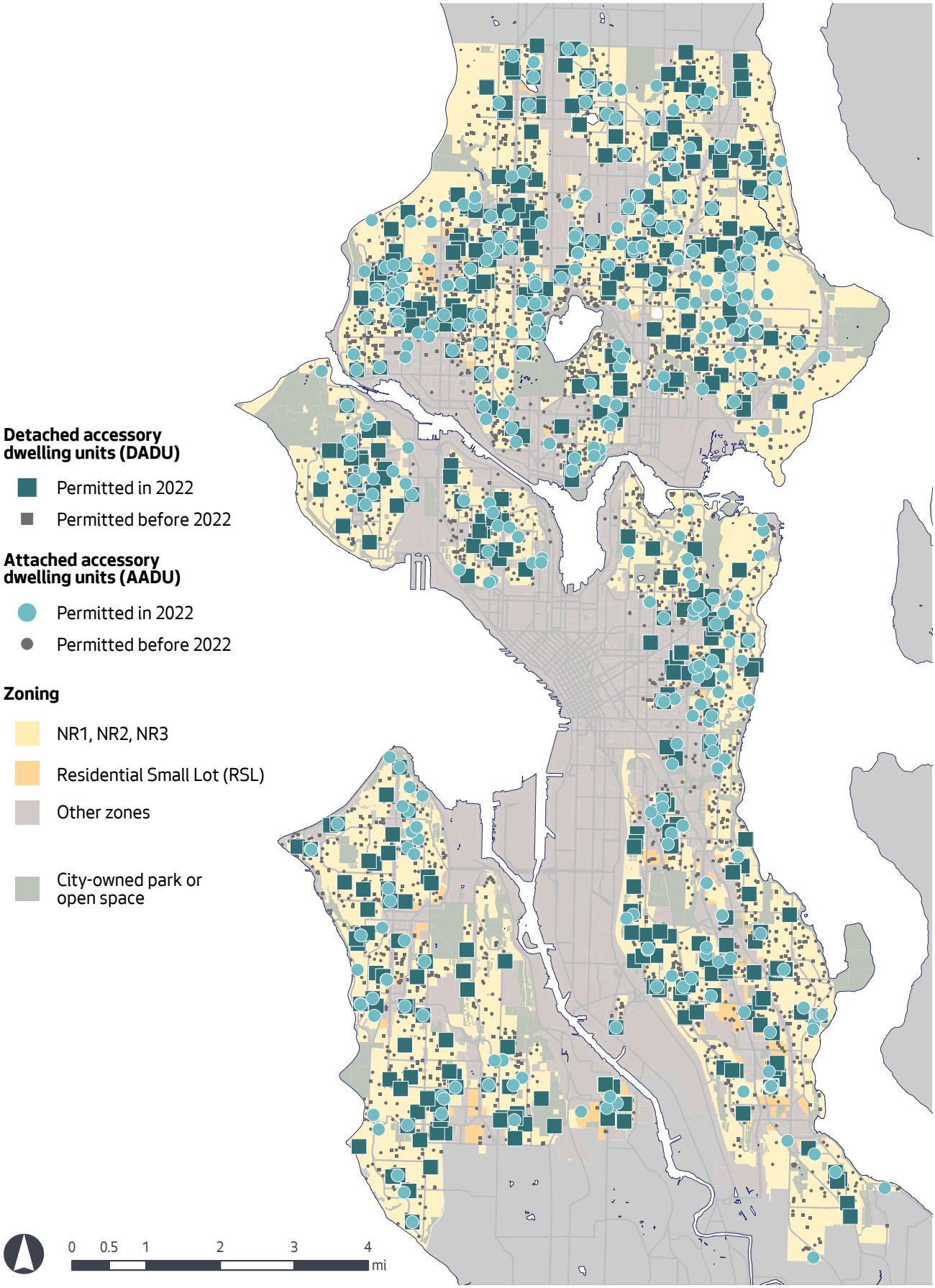
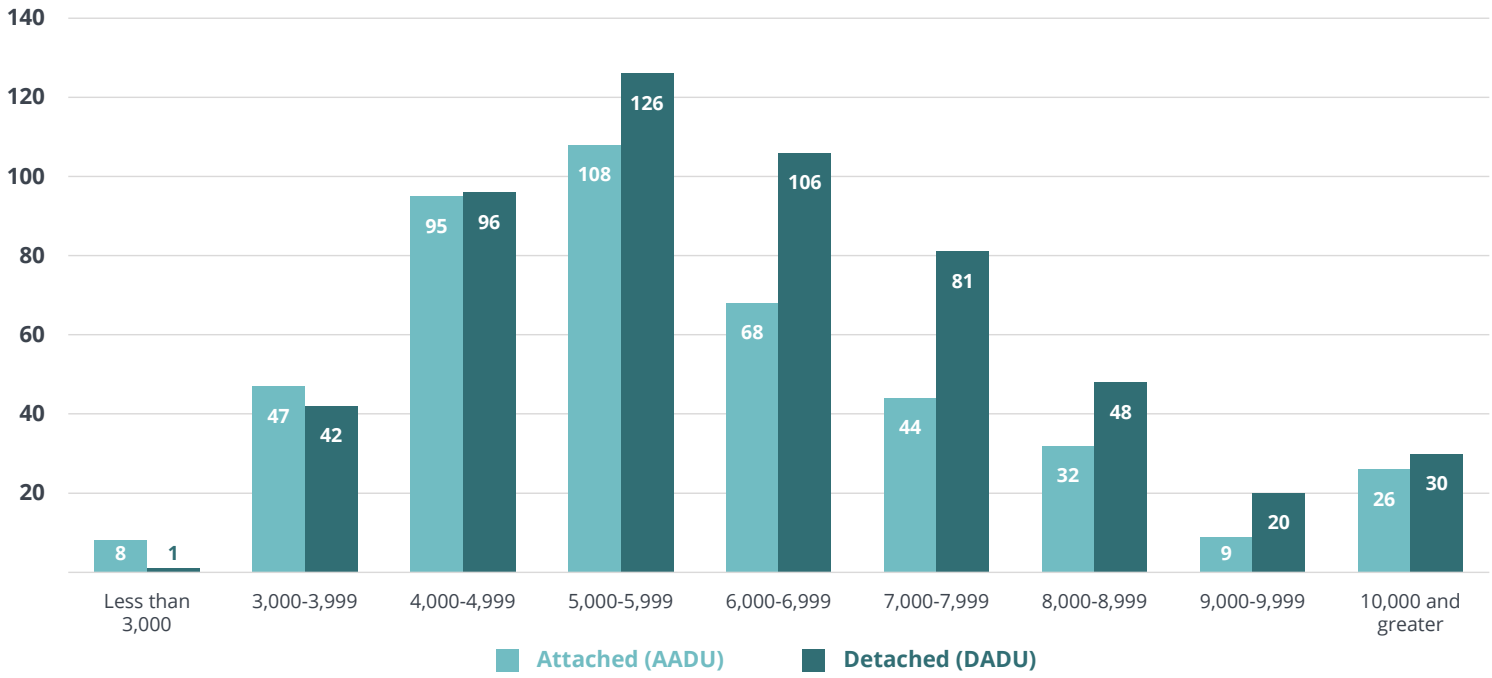


Exhibit 3 categorizes last year's ADU permits by lot size. The median lot size for AADU and DADU permits issued in 2022 was 5,666 and 6,008 square feet, respectively. This is substantially larger than the median lot size in NR and RSL zones overall — 5,244 and 4,999 square feet, respectively — lending some empirical support to the notion that ADUs are somewhat more feasible on relatively larger sites. The larger lot size for DADUs suggests additional land area is particularly valuable for adding a detached backyard structure.

Exhibit 6 ADUs permitted in 2022 by lot size



We can also categorized ADU permits by how the units are created, either through new construction, an alteration of or addition to an existing structure, or a change of use where no construction is involved. Exhibit 7 identifies the share of ADU permits in 2022 in each category.

Exhibit 7 ADUs permitted in 2022 by permit type

	New construction	Addition / alteration	Change of use (no construction)	Total
AADU	308	127	2	**437**
DADU	279	269	3	**551**
Total	**587**	**396**	**5**	**988**

Neighborhood characteristics

Through permit data, we can evaluate questions about the distribution of ADU permits throughout Seattle that shows a more complete picture beyond the citywide increase in overall production. While the survey data described in Section 5 provides more specific information about the socio-economics of households creating ADUs, a neighborhood-level analysis of median income is nonetheless instructive. Exhibit 8 shows how ADU production varies according to an area's median household income, measured at the census tract level for tracts with ADU permits. Thirty percent of ADUs permitted in 2022 were census tracts where the median household income was more than $135,000.

Exhibit 8 **ADUs permitted in 2022 by census tract and median household income**

Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

Median household income (by census tract)	AADUs	DADUs	Total ADUs	Percentage of total	Percentage of tracts in this income range
Less than $55,000	3	10	13	1%	3%
$55,000-85,000	57	85	142	14%	17%
$85,001-110,000	105	155	260	26%	22%
$110,001-135,000	128	149	277	28%	29%
Greater than $135,000	144	152	296	30%	29%
Total	**437**	**551**	**988**	**100%**	**100%**

The total number of ADU permits, as shown in Exhibit 8, does not consider the amount of Neighborhood Residential zoning in each census tract, which can vary substantially. Census tracts with lower median household income tend to have relatively less NR zoning than tracts with higher median household income. To account for this, Exhibit 9 shows census-tract level ADU production in 2022 as a rate per acre of NR or RSL zoning in the tract. Plotting permit data in this way lets us evaluate whether ADUs are more prevalent higher-income census tracts due to a socioeconomic pattern or merely because there's more NR and RSL zoning in those areas. The chart shows that, after controlling for the amount of NR zoning in a given tract, there is no statistically significant relationship between last year's ADU permits and a neighborhood's median household income ($R^2 = 0.0351$). Put differently, ADUs in 2022 were more or less equally likely to be permitted in lower- and higher-income census tracts. Importantly, this analysis of permit data does not provide insight into the incomes of the specific property owners building ADUs, whose individual incomes may differ substantially from a neighborhood average. In Section 5, we discuss responses from a survey of ADU owners and occupants where we asked about household income and other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

Exhibit 9 **ADUs permitted in 2022 by census tract and median household income, normalized by amount of NR and RSL zoning**

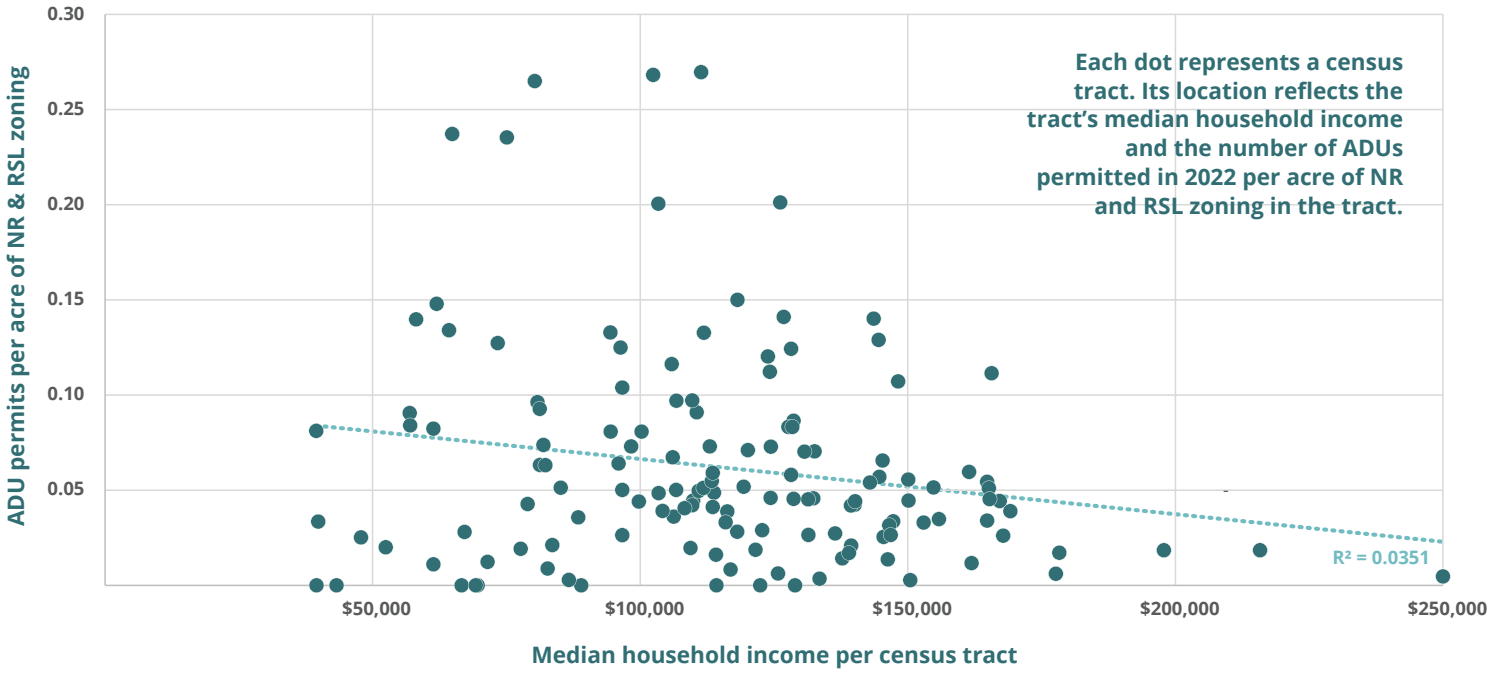


Exhibit 10 shows the same data as a map, with ADU permits from 2022 overlaying median household income at the census tract level.

Exhibit 11 overlays the ADUs permitted in 2022 on the City's Displacement Risk Index, a composite measure of demographic, built environment, and market data points that identifies where people of color, low-income residents, and others might face heightened displacement pressure as the city grows over time. As in previous years, most ADUs permitted in 2022 were in census tracts with low displacement risk. This is partly because most areas in Neighborhood Residential zones have low displacement risk.

Exhibit 10 ADUs permitted in 2022 and median household income by census tract

Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

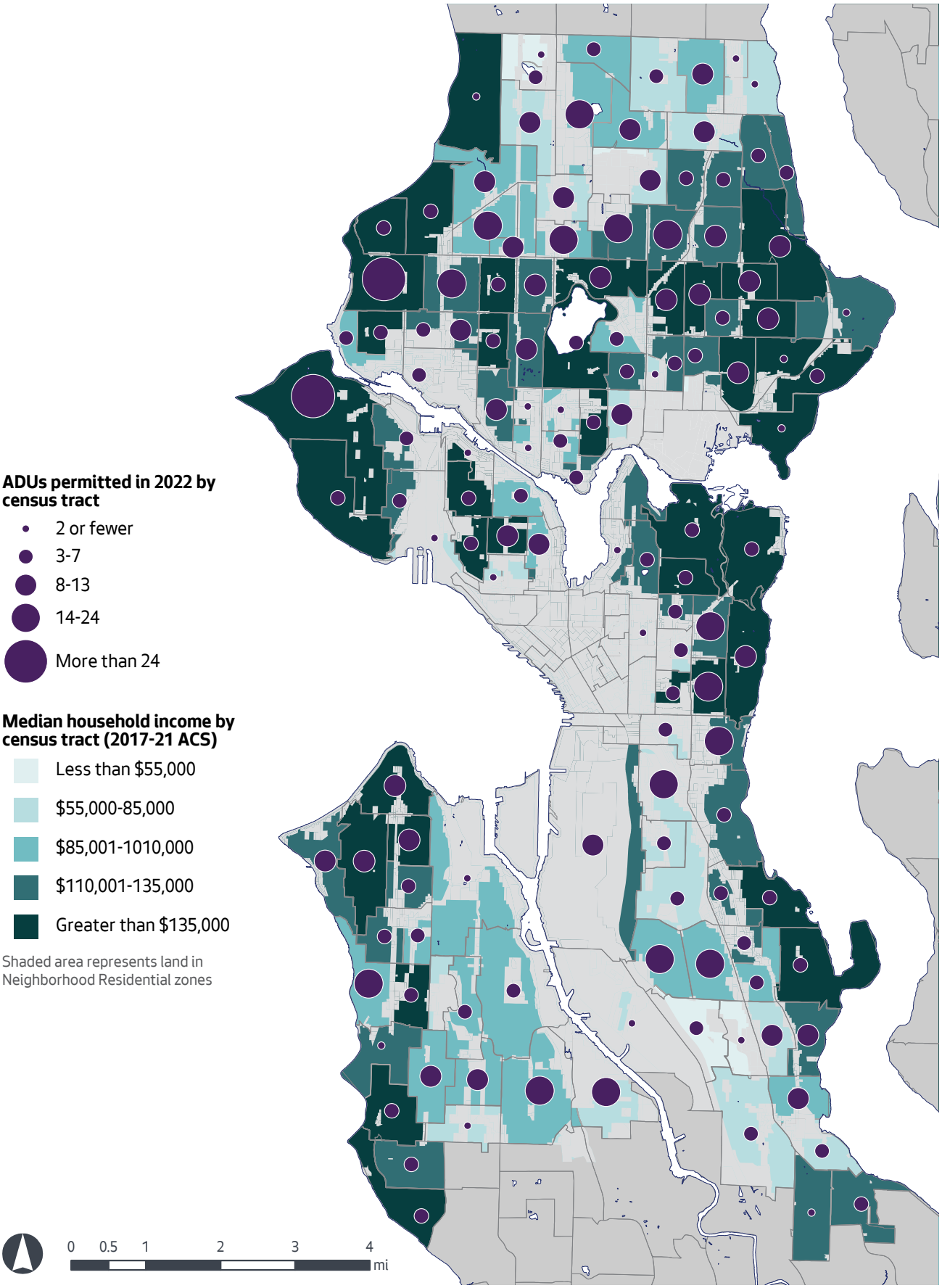
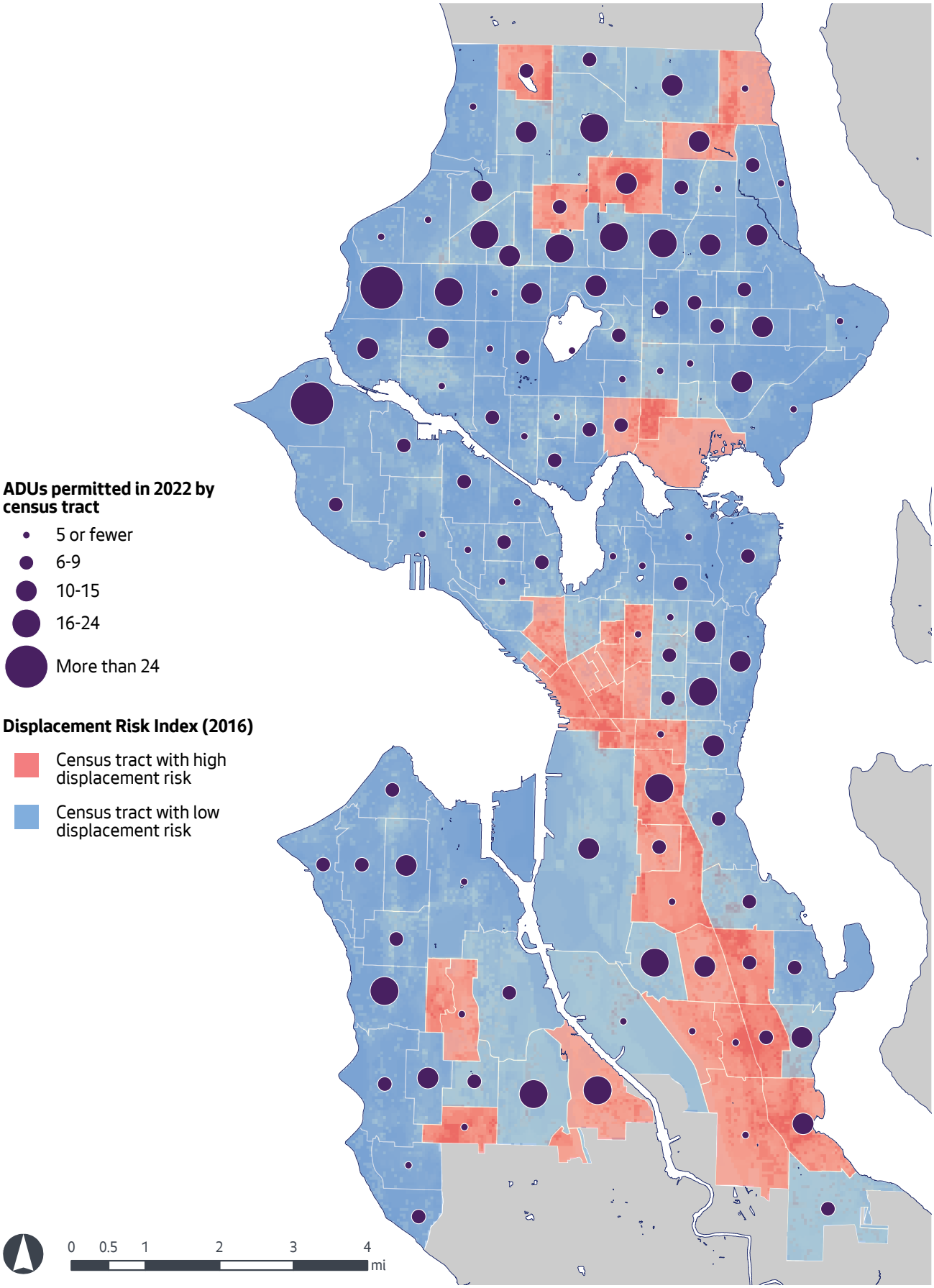


Exhibit 11 ADUs permitted in 2022 and census tracts categorized by displacement risk



3 Pre-approved DADU plans

In 2020, the City released a gallery of 10 pre-approved DADU designs on its ADUniverse website. Selected through a competitive process in 2019-2020, these plans have been reviewed for compliance with the City's structural and energy codes. The gallery includes a range of DADU sizes, unit types, and styles. Property owners who apply to permit one of these plans can expect a faster permitting timeline and somewhat reduced cost.

These plans have been permitted 130 times since their issuance in September 2020. Permitting for these 130 permits of the pre-approved DADUs averaged 56 calendar days from intake to issuance. This reflects an average of 37 days in SDCI review, 19 days out for corrections with the applicant, and 2.6 correction cycles. Other DADUs permitted in 2022 (without an AADU or single-family residence on the permit), averaged 149 days, 102 with SDCI and 47 with the applicant, and an average of 3.2 correction cycles.

Exhibit 12 Pre-approved DADU permit timelines

	Average intake to issuance (days)	Average in SDCI review (days)	Average out for correction (days)	Average correction cycles
Pre-approved DADU plans	55.7	36.9	18.8	2.6
DADU-only permits in 2022	149.0	102.2	46.8	3.2

These pre-approved DADU plans have been reviewed against applicable standards in the Land Use Code and the Seattle Residential Code (SRC). Construction codes like the SRC are updated on a three-year cycle. The pre-approved plans were reviewed under the 2018 SRC, which took effect in March 2021 and is valid until July 1, 2023.





One of the City's 10 pre-approved DADU designs. Credit Fivedot / Amaryllis Lockhart.

4 How ADUs are used

Short-term rentals

A short-term rental (STR) is a lodging use offered to guests for fewer than 30 consecutive nights. Since 2017, Seattle has had regulations that limit the number of units someone may operate as an STR to two units, the operator's primary residence and a secondary unit. 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 as short- or long-term rentals must also register with the City's **Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance** (RRIO) program.

STR licensing data from FAS provides a measure of how many ADUs are used as STRs. When obtaining a license, an operator must indicate their unit type, which lets us estimate the number of ADUs associated with STR licenses. Exhibit 13 shows the number of active STR licenses and the share associated with AADUs, DADUs, and "other" unit types.

Exhibit 13 Short-term rental licenses associated with ADU housing types

Short-term rental licenses		ADU production (1994-2022)		STRs as share of ADU permits issued
Unit type	Active licenses with active units	ADU type	ADUs in issued permits	
AADU	359	AADU	2,726	13%
DADU	110	DADU	1,533	7%
Other	59			
Total	**528**	**All ADUs**	**4,259**	**12%**

Exhibit 13 suggests that about 12 percent of active STR licenses are associated with ADUs citywide. This figure conservatively assumes that all units categorized as "other" in STR data are in fact ADUs, which could result if those operators are unsure how to categorize their unit. While this represents our best estimate of STR use among ADUs, it could underestimate the actual share since not all units operated as STRs are licensed. But it might also overrepresent the usage of ADUs as STRs since 1) it's unlikely all units categorized as "other" above are indeed ADUs; 2) someone might obtain a license but subsequently decide to use the ADU as a long-term rental or other use; 3) this dataset doesn't include the number of nights per year someone offers the ADU for STR use. Anecdotal information and the survey data in Section 5 of this report indicate that owners who use their ADU as an STR often do so alongside other uses, like housing for family or visitors, and have used or envision using the ADU for other purposes as well, like as a long-term rental.

Condominium ownership

A condominium is a form of tenure or ownership wherein a property is divided into several units that are owned individually and ownership includes a nonexclusive interest in certain shared elements or community property owned by a condominium association (i.e., a homeowners association or HOA). In general, Seattle's land use and building regulations apply identically to property and structures regardless of tenure. The City is not directly involved in the formation of a condominium, which is governed by state law (RCW 64.34 or 64.90) and administered locally at the county level.

In Seattle, many condos are located in multifamily buildings with stacked units, but they can also include other housing forms, including attached homes like townhouses and AADUs or detached housing like DADUs. In Neighborhood Residential zones, a lot can have one principal unit and up to two ADUs, but the property cannot be subdivided for separate "fee simple" ownership, which means a single entity owns the land. (Most townhouses are on unit lots for fee simple sale.) As a result, condos are sometimes created on lots with ADUs in NR zones. In recent years, we have observed an increase in this phenomenon and began tracking ADU condos more closely.

Exhibit 14 on the following page shows the number of ADUs permitted since 2010 on parcels with a recorded condominium. Very few ADUs were created as condo units before 2018, the first year with more than 10 ADU condos. A major increase occurred in 2020, when about one-fifth of ADUs permitted that are on condominium parcels. In 2021, about one-third of ADUs permitted that year are condos. (Note that a unit can become a condominium at any point, so ADUs permitted in the past may have become condos then or subsequently.) In those two years, DADUs were established as condos more often than AADUs, perhaps due to advantages with delineating separate ownership when no structural elements are shared. While ADU production data for 2022 is complete, data on condo recording from King County and updated condo platting typically lags, so the six percent figure for last year is likely an undercount.[2] The percentage of ADUs created as condos in 2021 (roughly one-third) is generally consistent with the share of 2022 permits that included multiple ADUs (42 percent) shown in Exhibit 3 and the share that included an ADU and a new SFR (35 percent) shown in Exhibit 4. These development schemes may be associated more often with condo creation, though more systematic analysis would be necessary to confirm this.

2 We rely on three data sources to track ADU condos. The first is the City's permitting data, which identifies when and where SDCI issues a permit for an AADU or DADU. When a property owner creates a condominium for their ADU(s), they record documentation with King County. This facilitates the second data source, the City's cadastral or survey dataset, which staff update regularly by querying the King County Recorder's Office for new condo recordings, subdivisions, townhouse plats, etc. Cadastral data tells us when a condo plat has been recorded. The third dataset comes from the King County Department of Assessments, which updates its parcel database with information about the condominium complex, the individual condo units, and any sales of those units that have occurred. These datasets let us triangulate when an ADU condo has been created and sold, even though the City is not involved in condo creation, and the County does not distinguish between AADUs, DADUs, and principal units in their parcel data consistently with the City. Because the timing of building construction, the execution of the condominium recording, and condo sales come from three separate administrative processes with their own timelines, we do not always know how many ADU condos are created or sold in recent months.

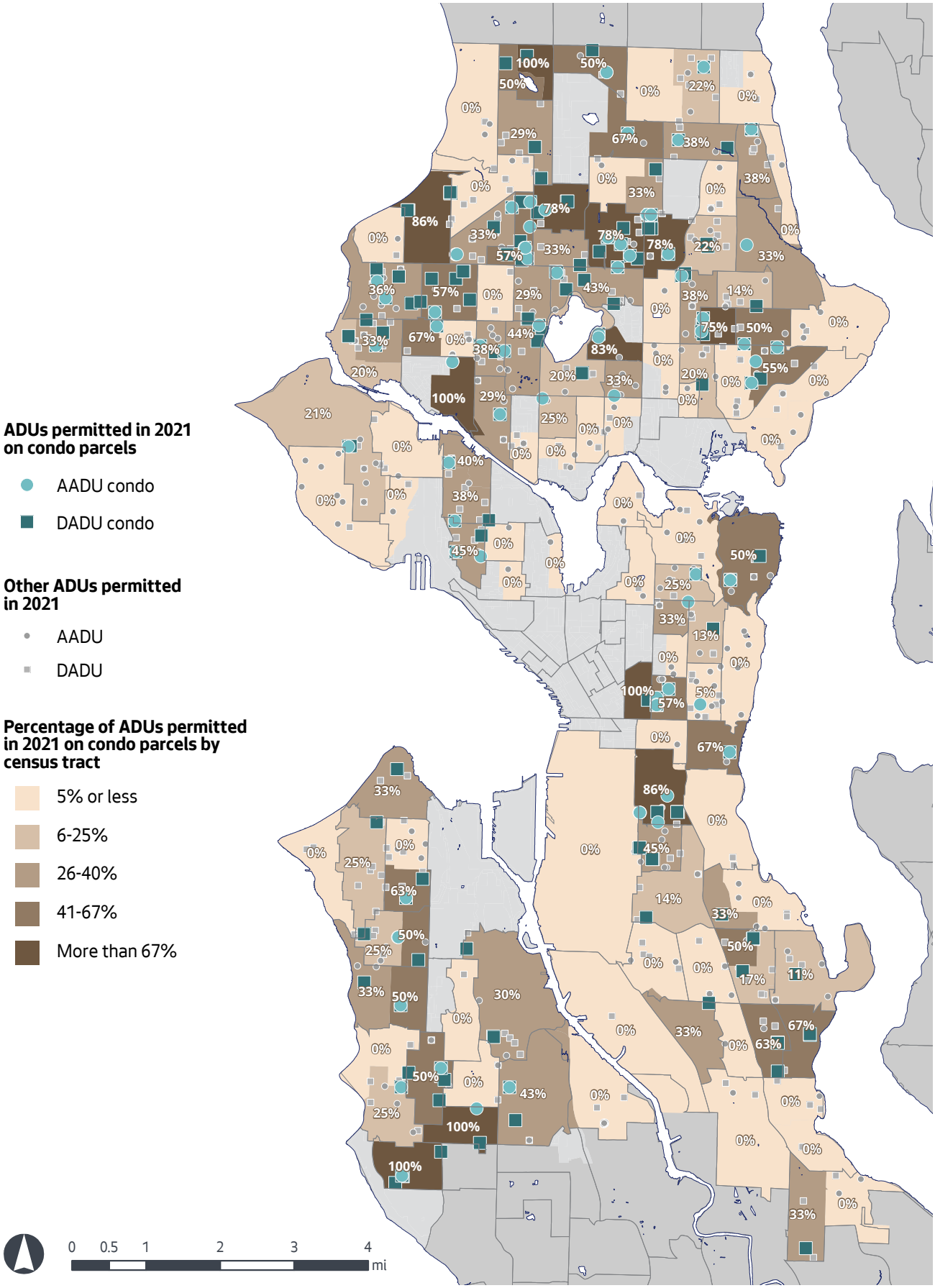
Exhibit 14 **ADU permits on condo parcels by year issued**

Source: OPCD analysis of King County Assessor data

	AADU			DADU			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
2010	81	0	0%	52	0	0%	133	0	0%
2011	64	0	0%	39	3	8%	103	3	3%
2012	65	0	0%	44	1	2%	109	1	1%
2013	75	0	0%	50	0	0%	125	0	0%
2014	91	0	0%	63	2	3%	154	2	1%
2015	104	0	0%	85	3	4%	189	3	2%
2016	155	1	1%	120	3	3%	275	4	1%
2017	138	2	1%	117	7	6%	255	9	4%
2018	126	0	0%	119	14	12%	245	14	6%
2019	150	3	2%	130	19	15%	280	22	8%
2020	233	33	14%	257	72	28%	490	105	21%
2021	342	94	27%	429	164	38%	771	258	33%
2022	*437*	*19*	*4%*	*551*	*37*	*7%*	*988*	*56*	*6%*

Exhibit 15 shows the geographic frequency of ADU condos permitted in 2021 and 2022. Each census tract is shaded according to the percentage of overall ADU permits issued on condo parcels in that tract.

Exhibit 15 ADUs permitted in 2021 on parcels with recorded condominiums



Due to their smaller size and/or land area, ADUs sold as condominiums may offer a lower price point for new construction in NR zones than is otherwise available.[3] Sales price data, including for condo units, is available publicly through the King County Department of Assessments (KCA). Unfortunately, due to differences in the attributes that the City tracks in its permitting data and the County in its property sales and assessment data, there is no systematic way to identify KCA records that represent sales of ADU condos. Condo sales cannot be linked directly to the type of unit sold (AADU, DADU, or SFR). However, it is possible to review individual records manually to gauge the relative price of ADU condo sales compared to SFRs sold as condos on the same lot. Exhibit 16 provides sales information about a sample of ADUs and SFRs sold as condos in 2021 and 2022. A full analysis of sales price information for ADU condos would require detailed manual review of all parcel data for sales in NR and RSL zones.

3 Creating a condominium for a property with an ADU does not always mean the ADU is sold as a separate condo unit. The house and any ADUs on the property may continue to be owned by the same single owner. Or on a property with an AADU and a DADU, the DADU might be sold to a separate buyer, and the main house and AADU are owned together (with the AADU perhaps offered as a rental unit). For discussion purposes, we will assume ADU condos are generally offered for sale separately from the main house.

Exhibit 16 Sample of sales data for NR parcels with ADU condos

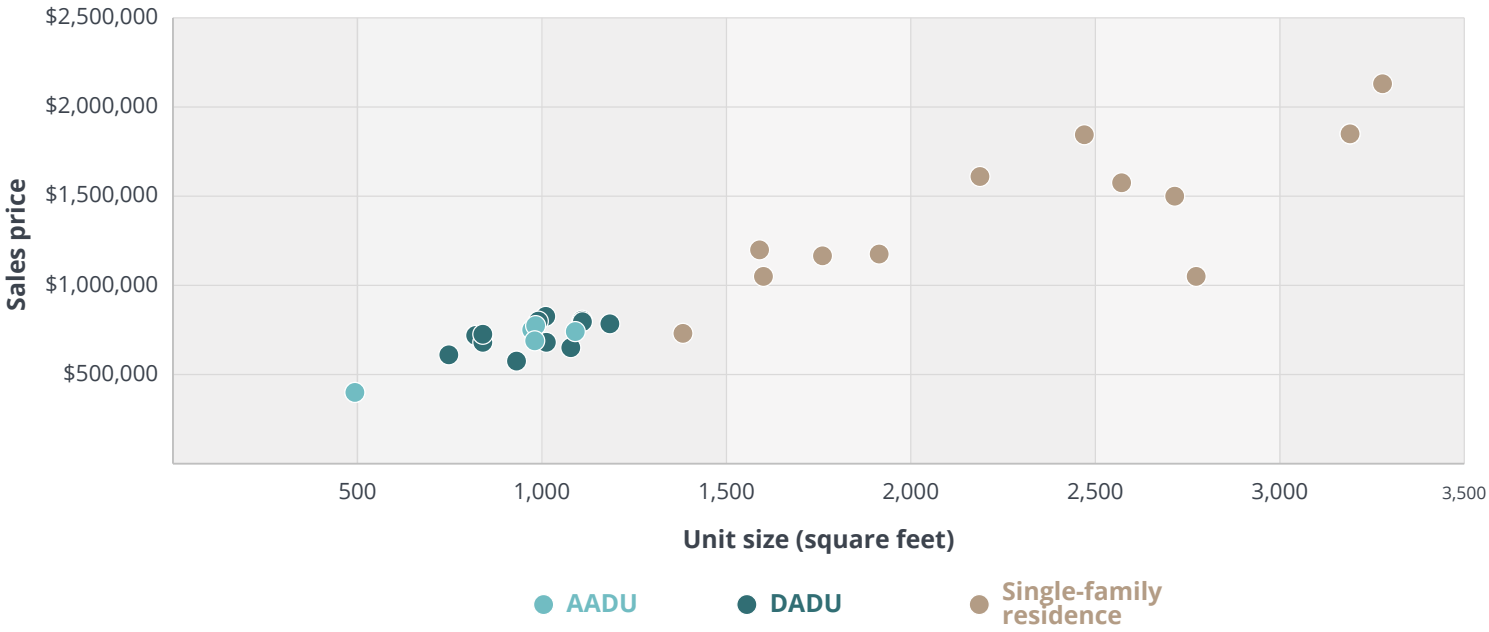
Source: OPCD analysis of King County Assessor data

Property address	Parcel number	Unit type	Square footage	Year permit finaled	Sale price	Sale date
2823 21st Ave W	8729840020	DADU	1,012	2020	$680,000	1/6/2021
	8729840010	SFR	1,914	2020	$1,175,000	2/3/2021
6034 3rd Ave NW	0465750020	DADU	1,010	2022	$825,000	7/29/2022
	0465750010	SFR	3,278	2022	$2,130,000	9/20/2022
411 NE 80th St	2617430020	DADU	748	2019	$610,000	3/8/2022
7047 16th Ave NW	7698380020	DADU	820	2022	$719,000	5/11/2022
	7698380010	SFR	3,190	2022	$1.850,000	8/10/2022
9051 Dibble Ave NW	6094470020	DADU	1,184	2021	$783,000	5/13/2021
	6094470010	SFR	2,715	2021	$1,500,000	5/14/2021
3614 S Findlay St	2719200030	AADU	493	2021	$399,000	7/22/2021
	2719200020	DADU	931	2021	$575,000	7/15/2021
	2719200010	SFR	2,773	2021	$1,050,000	7/22/2021
617 23rd Ave E	7802960020	AADU	972	2022	$750,000	1/14/2022
	7802960030	AADU	983	2022	$774,000	1/13/2022
	7802960010	SFR	1,590	2022	$1,199,000	1/14/2022
6252 52nd Ave NE	7804440020	DADU	1,109	2021	$800,000	12/2/2021
	7804440010	SFR	1,600	2021	$1,050,000	12/3/2021
7051 26th Ave NE	7698490020	AADU	980	2021	$689,000	12/17/2021
	7698490030	DADU	1,109	2021	$804,000	12/23/2021
	7698490010	SFR	2,571	2021	$1,575,000	2/11/2022
5056 26th Ave SW	2539170020	DADU	840	2022	$679,950	5/18/2022
	2539170010	SFR	840	2022	$710,000	4/20/2022
6718 16th Ave NW	7804510020	AADU	1,090	2022	$740,000	3/4/2022
	7804510030	DADU	1,110	2022	$795,000	3/14/2022
	7804510010	SFR	1,760	2022	$1,165,000	3/15/2022
7359 20th Ave NW	7698620020	DADU	840	2022	$725,000	8/3/2022
	7698620010	SFR	2,470	2022	$1,845,000	8/15/2022
1335 California Ave SW	8600420020	DADU	990	2022	$799,000	3/22/2022
	8600420010	SFR	2,187	2022	$1,610,000	3/22/2022
7940 28th Ave SW	7698650020	DADU	1,078	2022	$649,950	10/11/2022
	7698650010	SFR[1]	1,382	2022	$730,000	6/1/2022

1 Not new construction

Exhibit 17 illustrates the same sample of sales data by unit type. Though a relatively small sample, we see the ADUs sold as condos create a lower price point than single-family residences, primarily due to their smaller size. This creates ownership opportunities in Seattle neighborhoods where other new homes are generally much less affordable. That said, most ADUs sold as condos remain out of reach to lower-income households.

Exhibit 17 **Sample condo sales in NR zones by unit size and type**

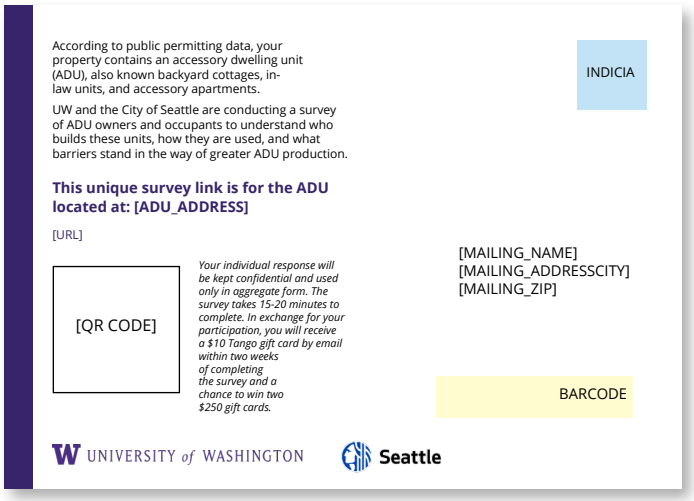


5 Survey of ADU owners and occupants

Ordinance 125854 also directed SDCI and OPCD to conduct a voluntary survey of ADU owners and occupants to collect descriptive statistics including information on the use, size, financing, rent charged, ownership, design, and construction of ADUs built in Seattle and general demographic information of ADU owners and occupants.

In spring 2022, OPCD partnered with the University of Washington to create and disseminate a survey of ADU owners and occupants. We identified addresses for all ADU permits issued between 2016 and 2021 and mailed a postcard to the property address and, when it differed, to the taxpayer address for the property as well. This gave us the opportunity to reach ADU owners who may not live on the property where the ADU is located. The postcard included a property-specific QR code and link to the survey. Respondents received a $10 gift card for completing the survey.





Postcard sent to addresses for ADU permits issued between 2016 and 2021 with a unique survey link.

Who we heard from

We mailed the postcards to the property and taxpayer addresses for 2,465 ADUs with permits issued 2016-2021 and received 522 responses (21 percent response rate). Exhibit 18 shows the location of ADUs where we mailed a postcard and those for which we received a response. Exhibit 19 shows the response rate by ZIP code. We consider this a successful response rate given the challenges inherent in voluntary surveys. The responses provide insights into the characteristics of ADUs and their owners and occupants that are not otherwise available through permitting data. That said, we cannot draw firm conclusions about the representativeness of the results since some ADU owners or occupants may be relatively more likely to respond to a survey asking about their experience creating or living in the unit.

The survey asked several questions to understand characteristics of the respondents. Since we were seeking to hear from both ADU owners and occupants, we asked about the respondent's relationship to and how they use the ADU(s) on the property. About three-quarters (73 percent) of respondents owned the ADU. Nine percent were ADU occupants (who either pay or don't pay rent). Some ADU owners live in the ADU and rent their main house (seven percent) or own the ADU as a condominium unit while a different party owns the main house (four percent).

Exhibit 18 Recipients of and respondents to our ADU owners and occupants survey

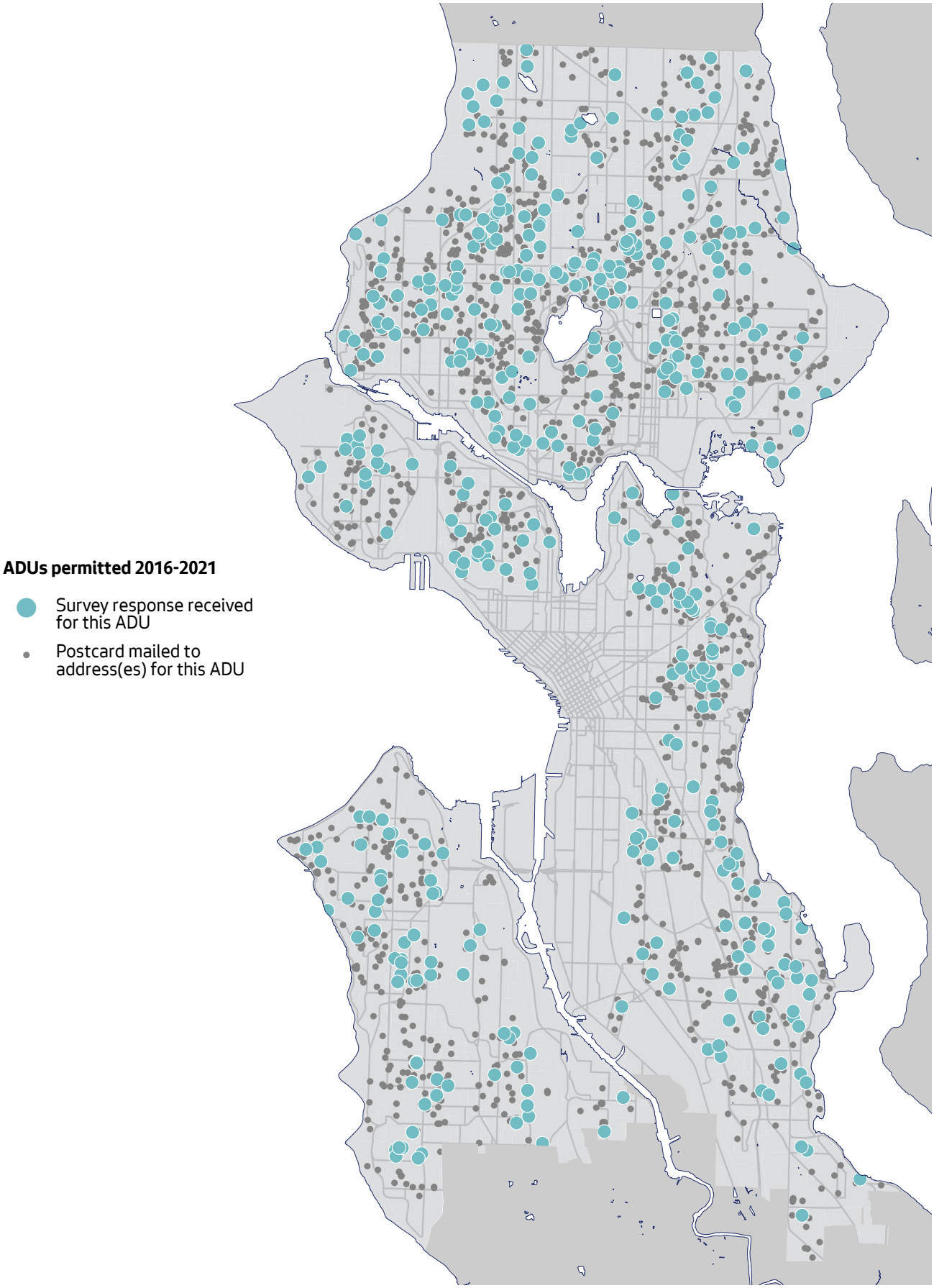


Exhibit 19 Survey response rate by ZIP code

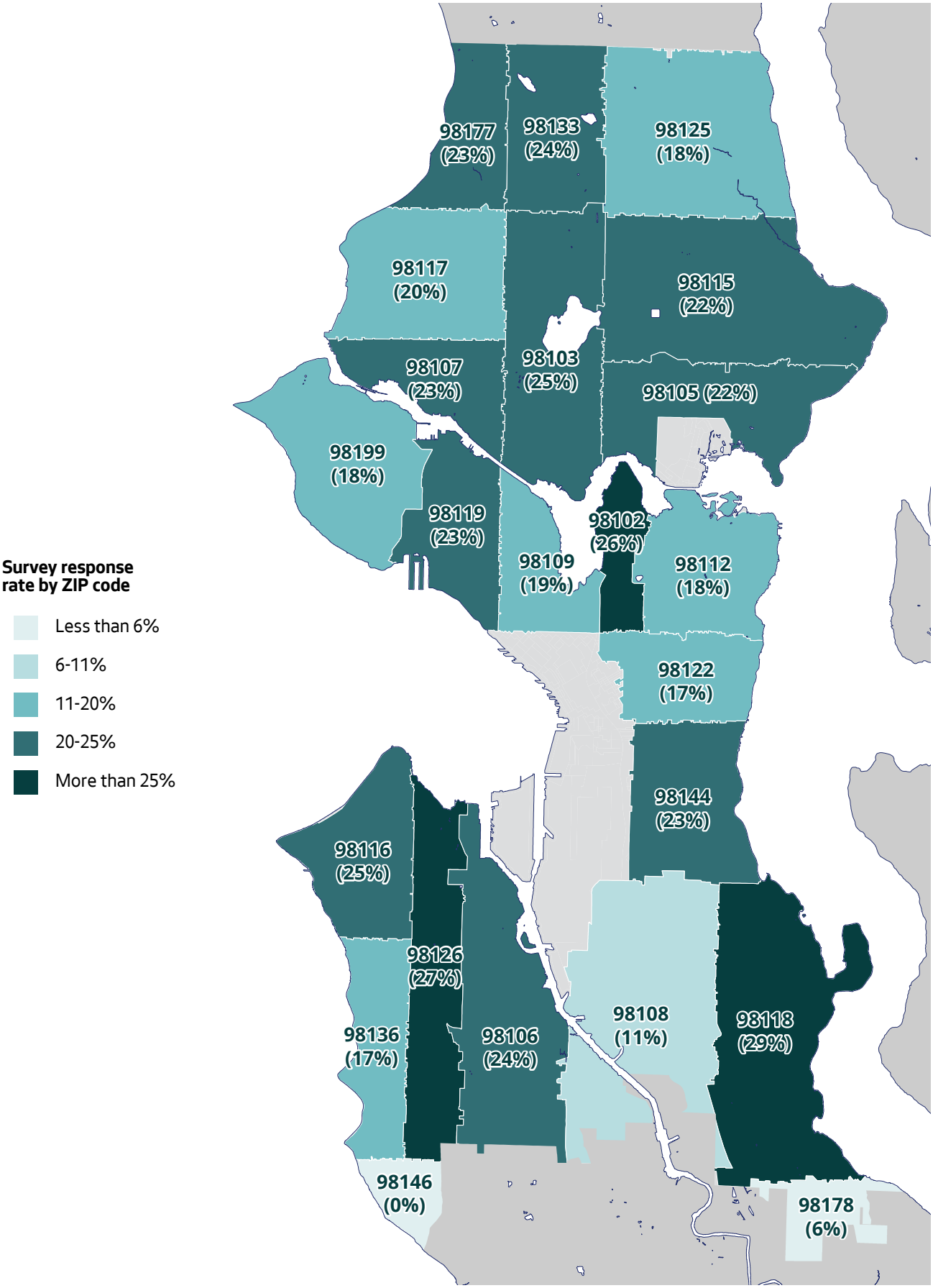


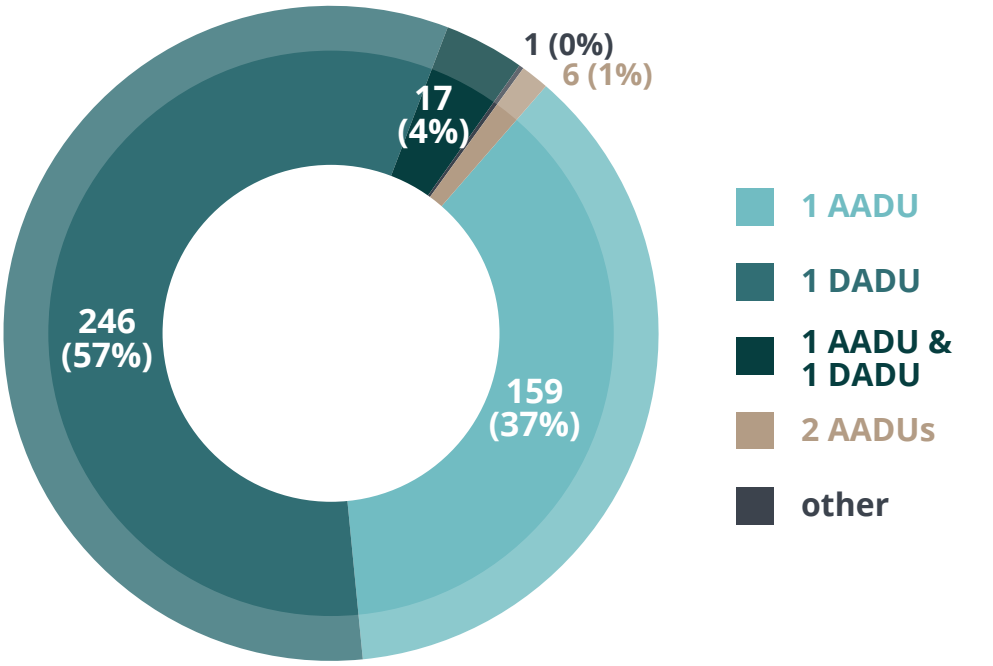
Exhibit 20 Relationship of survey respondents to their ADU (n=522)

Which of the following best describes your relationship to the ADU(s)?	Percentage of respondents	Number of responses
I own the ADU, and use the ADU for personal use or rent it (short-term or long-term) or other use	62.3%	325
I own and live in the ADU, and I rent out the main house	6.7%	35
I purchased the ADU as a condominium unit	4.2%	22
I pay rent to live in the ADU and do not own it	7.1%	37
I live in the ADU without paying rent and do not own it	2.1%	11
I am currently in the process of creating an ADU (i.e., I have a permit but construction isn't complete yet)	10.0%	52
I work for a developer, builder, or other company involved in creating the ADU	0.2%	1
Other	7.5%	39

Number of types of ADUs

Seattle allows both attached and detached ADUs and, since 2019, has allowed two ADUs on each lot. In this survey, we asked respondents how many and what type of ADUs are on their property (whether built, in construction, or in permitting). Most respondents (57 percent) had one DADU on the property, and 37 percent had one AADU. About four percent had an AADU and a DADU, a new option unlocked in 2019. Just one respondent had two AADUs. Six responses chose "other" and described a range of other situations, including having more than two ADUs (which could be allowed on larger sites or in RSL zones).

Exhibit 21 Number and type of ADUs among survey respondents (n=429)



ADU use

Respondents received a different set of questions based on their relationship to the ADU. For example, respondents who own the ADU (whether they live in the main house, in the ADU, or elsewhere) received questions about how they use the ADU, the monthly or nightly rent they charge, the cost to construct the ADU, and their motivations for and experience with building the ADU. Likewise respondents who occupy but do not own the ADU (whether or not they pay rent to live there) received questions about rent and their experience living in the ADU. All respondents received separate sets of the same questions about demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, allowing us to compare responses across groups.

Respondents who indicated that they owned the ADU were asked about its use in the past, currently, and planed for the future. The questions about past and future use allowed respondents to select multiple options; respondents had to choose a single option for how they currently use the ADU.

Though we didn't ask about it directly, we also received some responses from property owners who partnered with **The BLOCK Project**, an organization that places homes in homeowners' backyards for people experiencing homelessness.

Exhibit 22 Survey responses on ADU use

How is the ADU currently being used? (n=415)	Percentage of respondents	Number of responses
I rent to a long-term tenant that I did not know previously	21.3%	93
I rent to a family member/acquaintance	10.1%	44
I offer it as a short-term rental through a platform like Airbnb or Vrbo	11.0%	48
I make it available for free to a family member or friend	11.9%	52
I live in the ADU	14.6%	64
I live in the ADU and own it as a condo	5.0%	22
It is the residence for a caregiver	0.0%	0
I use it as space for occasional house guests or visitors	6.2%	27
I use it as additional living space or something other than a residence	6.9%	30
Not currently being used for anything	1.4%	6
I am currently building the ADU and it is not in use yet	11.2%	49
Other (please describe)	5.3%	23

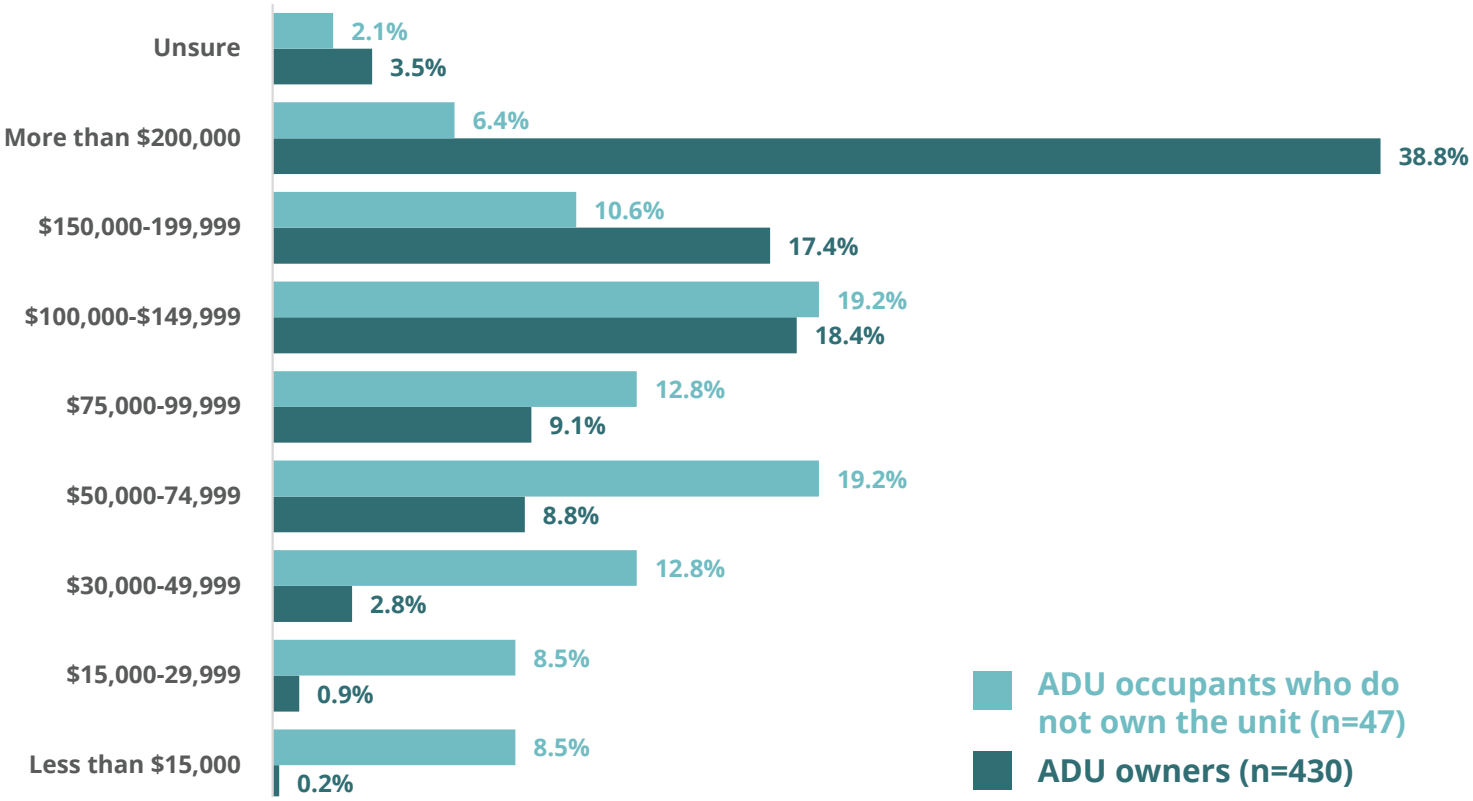
How have you used your ADU in the past? Select all that apply. (n=68)	Percentage of respondents	Number of responses
As a long-term rental	24%	16
As a short-term rental	15%	10
As an extra room or workspace	38%	26
I lived in the ADU and rented the main house	3%	2
As space for occasional house guests or visitors	57%	39
As a residence for a caregiver	1%	1
I haven't used the ADU in the past	15%	10
None of the above	3%	2
Other (please describe)	10%	7

How do you plan on using your ADU in the future? Select all that apply. (n=68)	Percentage of respondents	Number of responses
I plan to rent to a long-term tenant whom I did not know previously	18%	12
I plan to rent to a family member/acquaintance	13%	9
I plan to use it as a short-term rental through a platform like Airbnb or Vrbo	21%	14
I plan to make it available for free to a family member/acquaintance	29%	20
I plan to live in the ADU and rent the main residence	4%	3
I plan to use it as additional living space or something other than a residence	50%	34
Not sure yet	21%	14
Other (please describe)	10%	7

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of ADU owners and occupants

Household income varied substantially between ADU owners and ADU occupants who don't own the unit. This is a key insight from the survey as it helps us understand who can create an ADU and who benefits from the opportunity to own or live in an ADU. Respondents who own the ADU reported higher incomes than respondents who rent or occupy but don't own the ADU. Nearly 40 percent of owners reported a before-tax household income above $200,000, and more than half had incomes of at least $150,000. About one-fifth of owners had a household income of $100,000-149,999 and less than $100,000 (18 percent and 22 percent, respectively). Thirteen percent of respondents reported a household income under $75,000, which could constitute low-income households depending on household size. Among ADU occupants who do not own the unit, only six percent reported a household income above $200,000 and 11 percent between $150,000 and $199,999. Nearly half (49 percent) of ADU occupants had a household income under $75,000.

Exhibit 23 **Approximately how much was your household's before-tax income in the last 12 months? Include all income, including salaries, wages, investments, government benefits, etc. (n=477)**

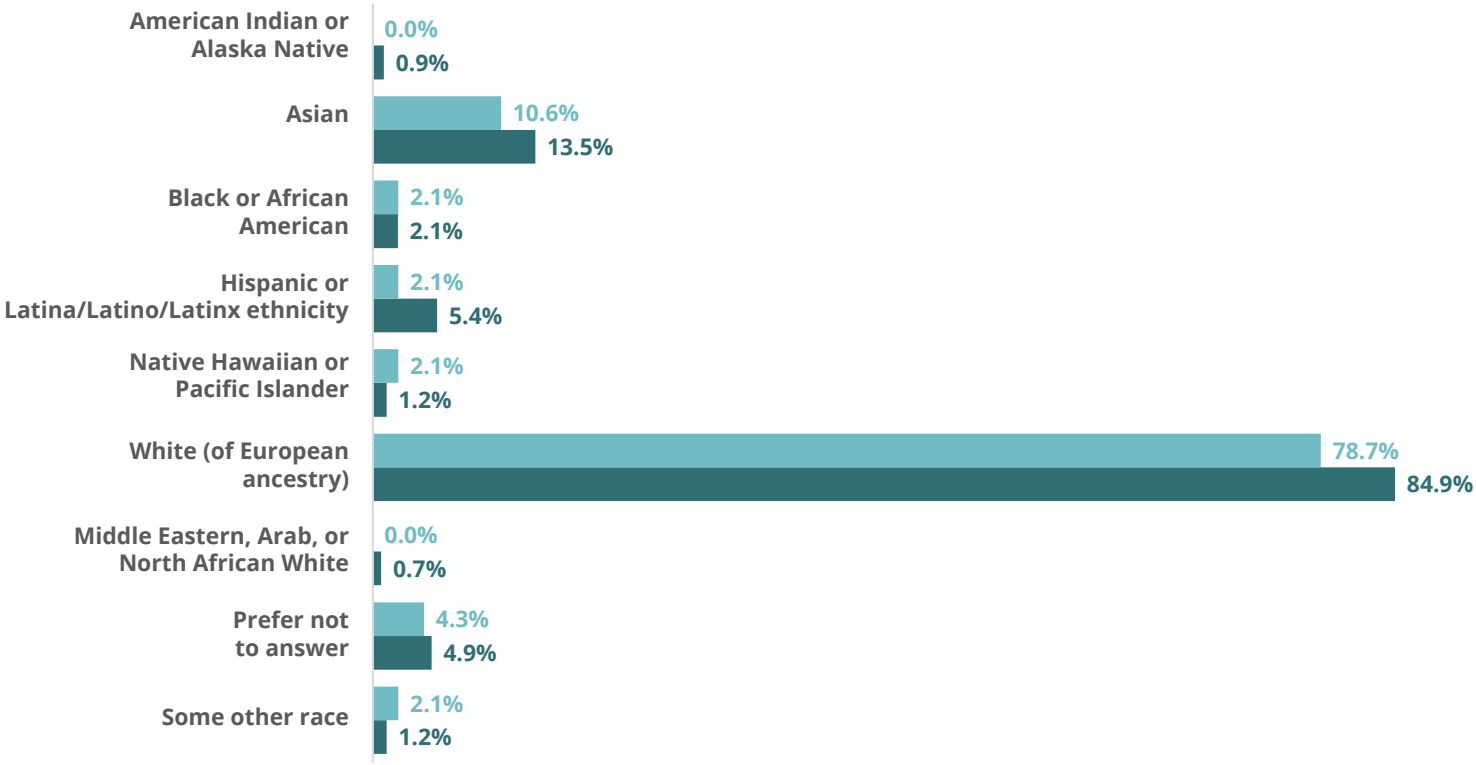


The survey asked about the race or ethnicity of respondents. Responses again varied between ADU owners and occupants who don't own the unit. In both groups, a large majority of respondents were white: almost 85 percent of ADU owners and 79 percent of ADU occupants. For reference, both figures are higher than the share of all Seattle residents who are non-Hispanic white (59.5 percent[4]) and the percentage of Seattle homeowners overall who are non-Hispanic white (70 percent[5]), though this is an imperfect comparison given differences in race/ethnicity categories and question structure. For both groups, responses suggest that the opportunity to build or live in an ADU is disproportionately benefiting white residents.

4 2020 Census figure for non-Hispanic white residents. Note that the survey allowed respondents to select multiple races.

5 2021 American Community Survey 1-year estimate. Table S2502.

Exhibit 24 What is your race or ethnicity? Select all that apply. (n=477)



We also asked about household size. The 2019 ADU legislation increased the size and height limits for DADUs to facilitate larger units that might better serve larger households and families with children. Most ADU households who do not own the unit are single-person households (64 percent), and just under a quarter are two people. Most ADU occupants who do own their unit (either as a condo unit or while renting out the main house) are two-person households (58 percent), and far fewer are just one person (only 23 percent).

Exhibit 25 Average household size of survey respondents who live in the ADU (n=477)

Number of people in household	ADU occupants who own the unit	ADU occupants who do not own the unit	Total (all ADU occupants)
1	64%	23%	41%
2	23%	58%	42%
3	6%	9%	8%
4	0%	9%	5%
5	4%	2%	3%
6 or more	2%	0%	1%

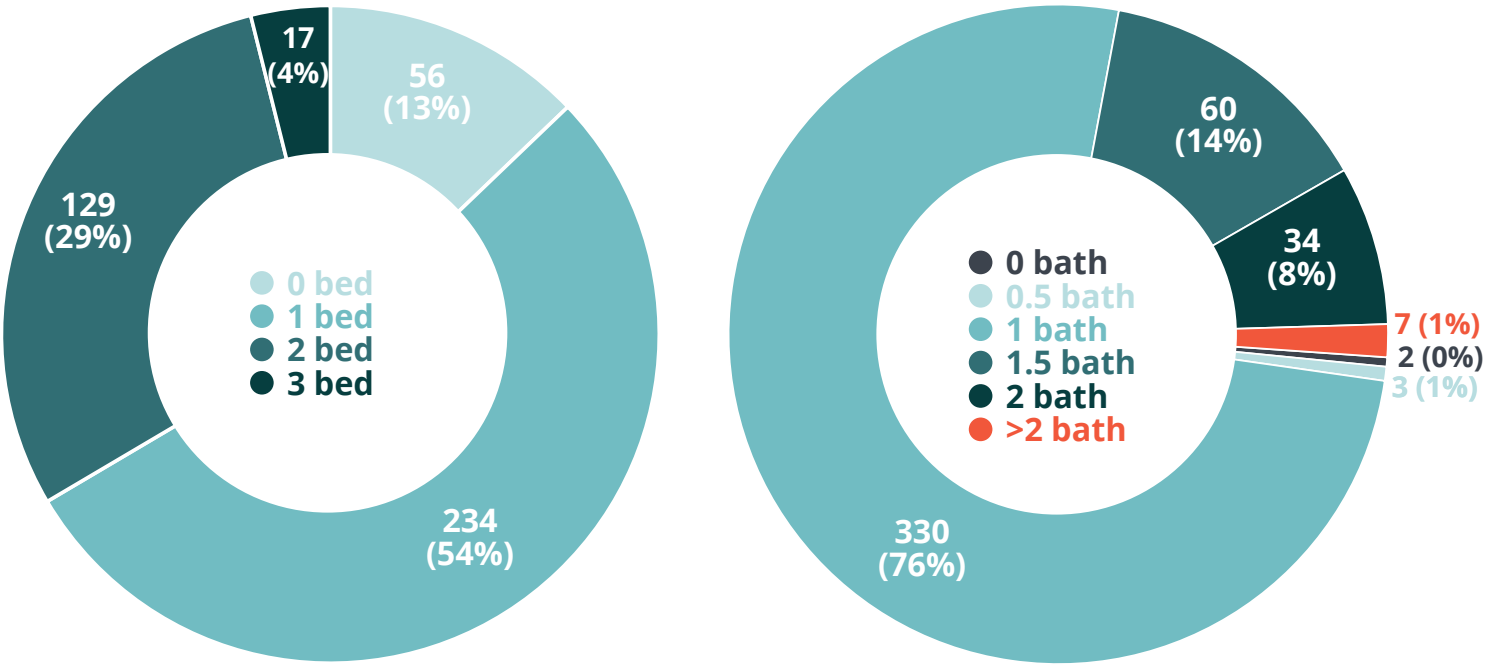
ADU characteristics

The survey asked respondents about the characteristics of their ADU, with a focus on attributes not available through City permitting data. Exhibit 26 shows the range, mean, and median of sizes and Exhibit 27 the distribution of bedrooms and bathrooms that respondents reported for their ADU.

Exhibit 26 ADU size in survey responses (n=420)

Square footage	Number of AADUs	Number of DADUs	Total ADUs
Less than 200	0	4	4
201-300	5	8	13
301-400	15	32	47
401-500	35	47	82
501-600	33	28	61
601-700	34	33	67
701-800	48	76	124
801-900	37	54	91
901-1,000	27	47	74
1,001-1,200	25	40	65
Greater than 1,200	0	0	0
	AADUs	**DADUs**	**All ADUs**
Mean (square feet)	724	702	718
Median (square feet)	750	735	750

Exhibit 27 Number of bedrooms and bathrooms in the ADU (n=436)



In addition to Exhibit 7, which reports ADU permits as new construction, addition/alteration or change of use based on City data, the survey offered respondents slightly more choices when we asked how their AADU or DADU was created. Almost 70 percent of the AADUs were created through conversion of existing space, and one in five was created as part of a new single-family residence. Only 10 percent were created through an addition to the main house (i.e., new living space). More than three-quarters of DADUs were new construction, a far larger share than we saw in permitting data from 2022, which was close to half. Of the remainder, conversion of an existing garage was the most common.

Exhibit 28 How was your AADU created? (n=176)

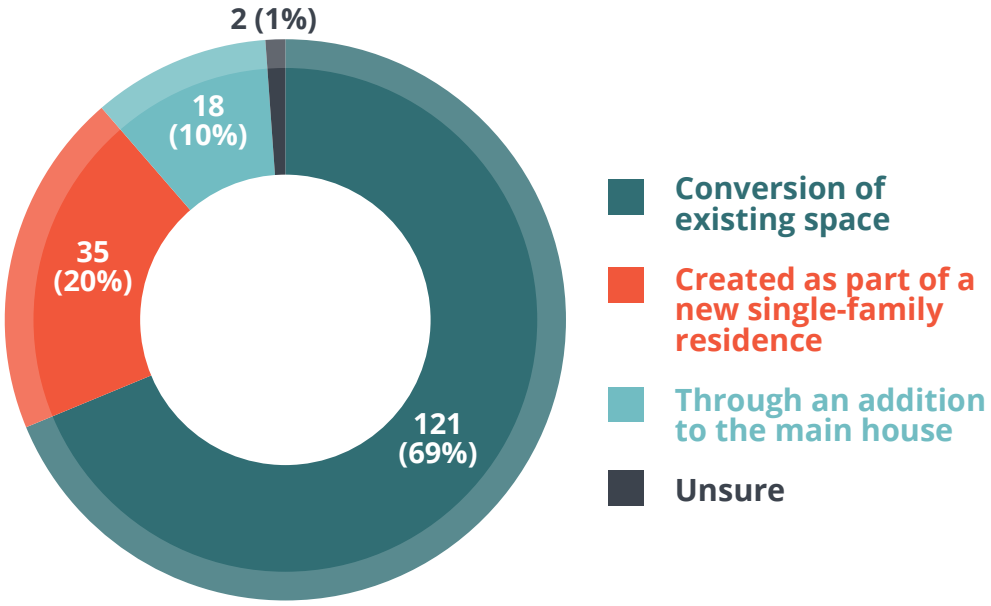
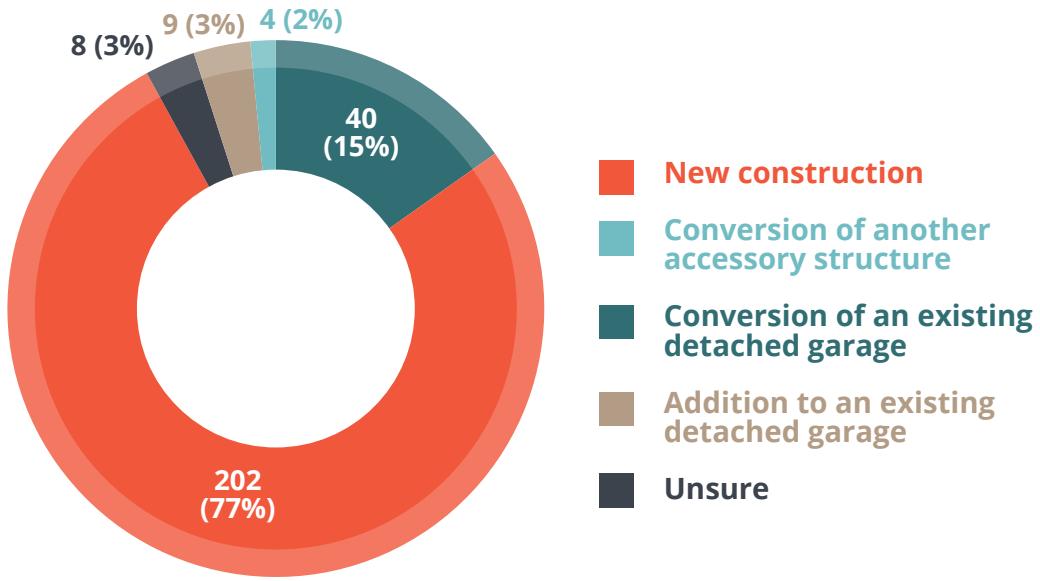


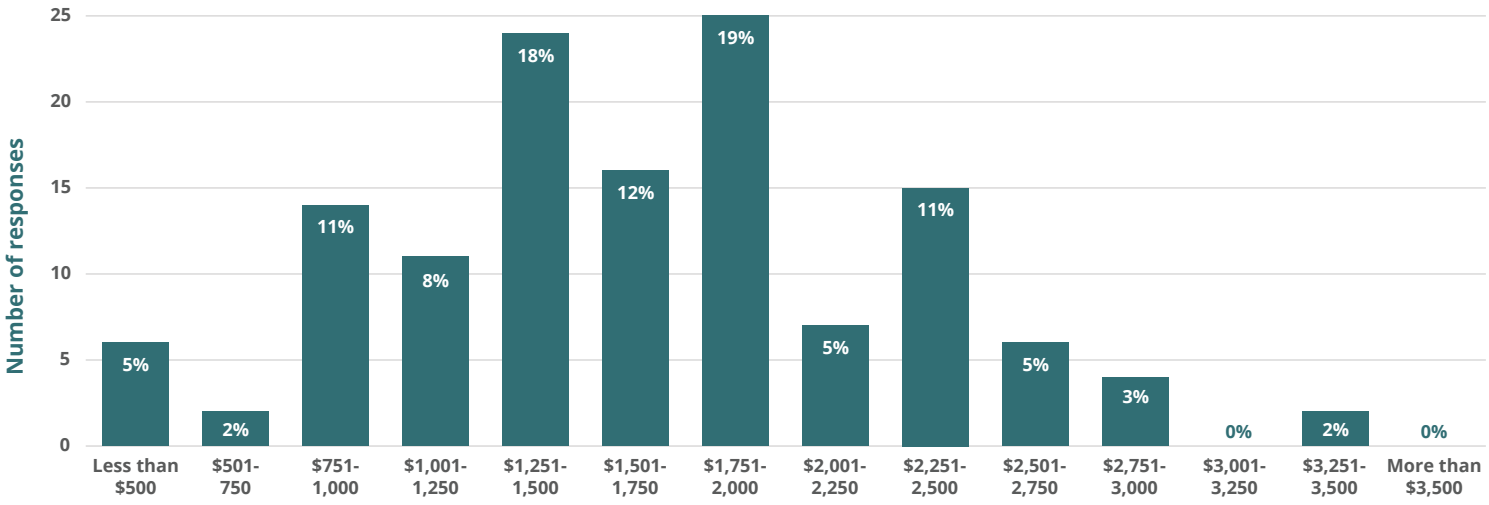
Exhibit 29 How was your DADU created? (n=263)



ADU costs and affordability

The survey aasked about the rents owners charge for their unit. Previous research has found that ADU rents vary substantially depending on the unit's size, location on the property, quality, location, and relationship of occupant to the owner. This survey similarly found a wide range of rents. Most respondents reported monthly rents between $1,250 and $2,000. The overall median rent for respondents was $1,650. As a point of general comparison, this is below the current median rent of $2,188 for one-bedroom apartments in Seattle,[6] even though 33 percent of ADUs in our survey were in fact two- and three-bedroom units. Eighty percent of respondents reported rent at or below that citywide one-bedroom figure. Some ADUs had rent at or below $1,000 per month (17 percent of respondents) and even some at or below $750 per month (six percent of respondents).

Exhibit 30 What is the current monthly rent for your ADU, not including utilities? (n=132)



We also asked about utilities in order to get a more complete picture of costs associated with renting an ADU. Roughly half of respondents reported charging nothing for utilities, i.e., including utilities in the monthly rent (43 percent). About a quarter of respondents each reported charging $1-100 and $101-200 for utilities, and 10 percent reported charging more than $200 per month. The highest amount reported was $900 per month for utilities associated with an ADU whose rent was $2,200 per month. The median utility charge was $50 per month.

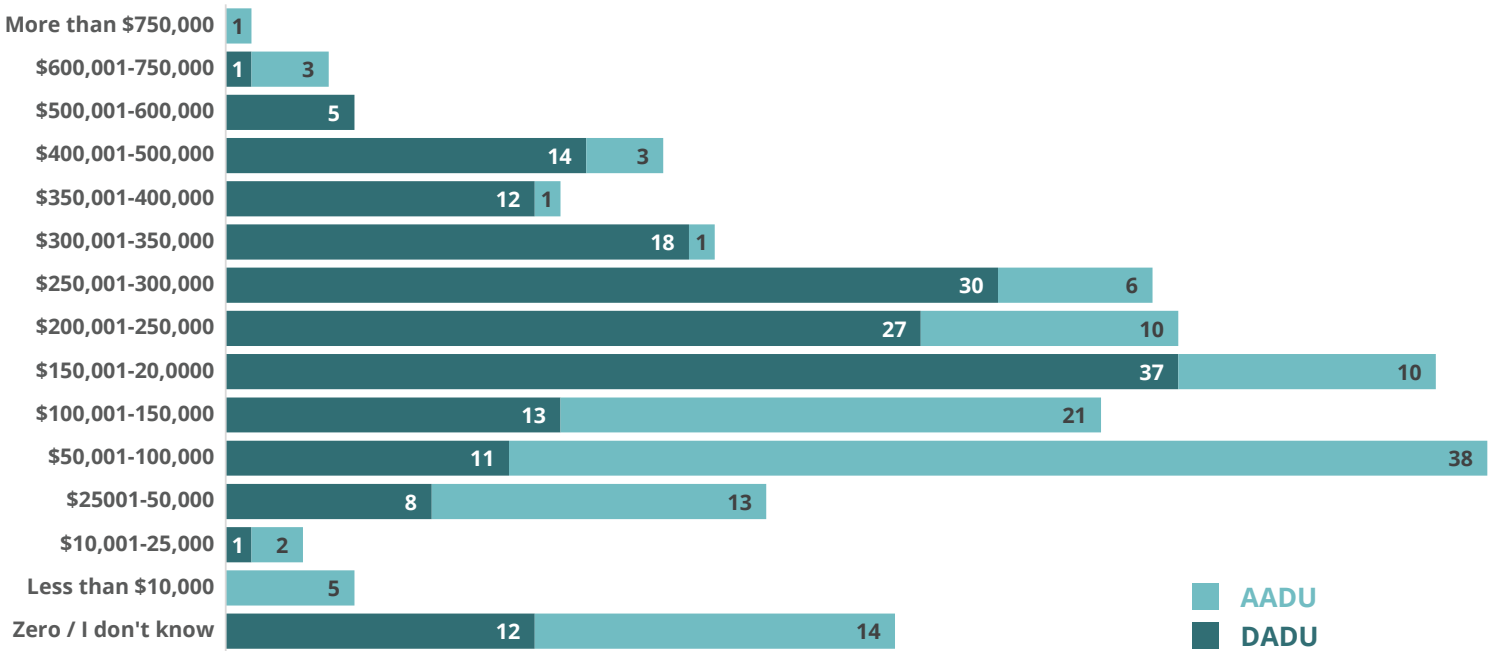
Exhibit 31 What does your tenant pay for utilities? (n=135)

Monthly utility fee	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
No charge for utilities	58	43%
$1-100	31	23%
$100-200	33	24%
More than $200	13	10%
Total	135	100%

6 CoStar 2022

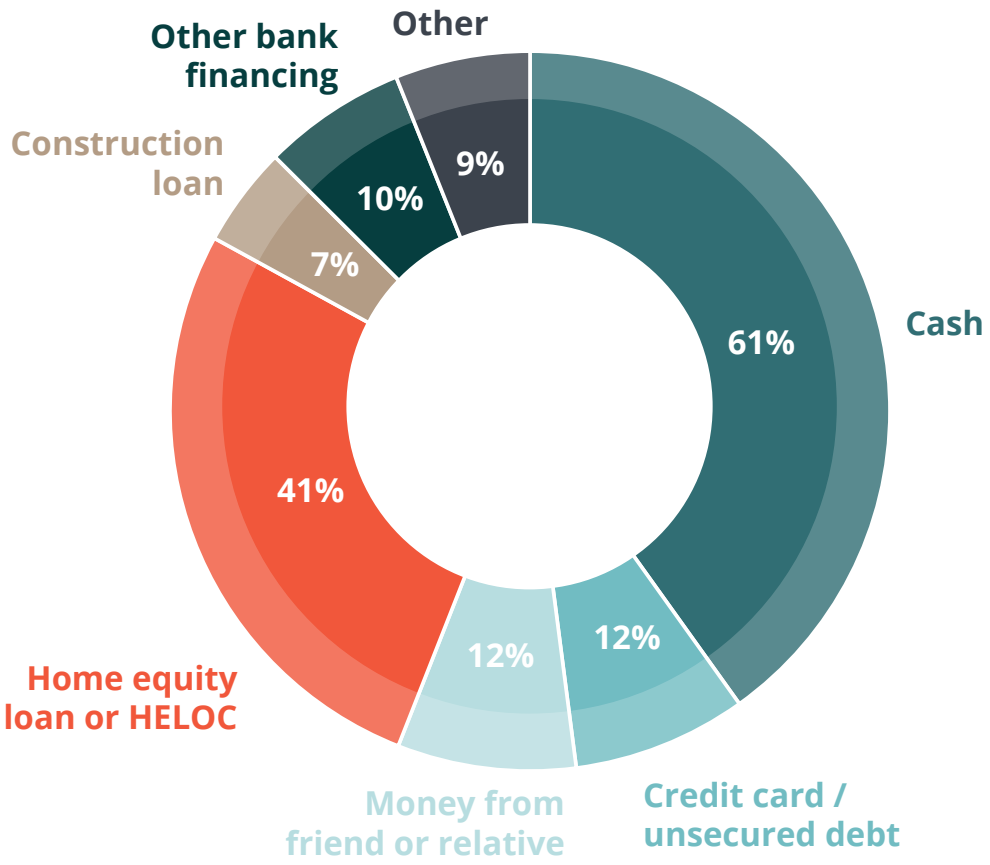
We also asked respondents who own their ADU about the costs associated with creating it. The question asked respondents to consider design, labor, materials, and permits. For property owners that have one ADU, then overall median cost to construct their ADU was $200,000 (n=318). In general, AADUs tend to have lower construction costs than DADUs, and the survey results reinforces this when we parse cost data by ADU type. The median for AADUs was $100,000 (n=128), while the median for DADUs was $230,000 (n=189). Both ADU types had a wide range of responses on cost, from $10,000 to $800,000 for AADUs and $20,000-$650,000 for DADUs.

Exhibit 32 **How much did you or someone else pay to construct your ADU? Please include the costs for design, labor, materials, and permits. Your best estimate is fine. If you do not know, enter 0. (n=318)**



Given the high cost of construction and the high median income among property owners generally, we also sought to understand how ADU owners paid for the construction of their units. More than 60 percent of respondents reported using cash for at least some of the cost (respondents were able to select multiple answers). The next most common method was a home equity loan or home equity line of credit (HELOC). Both these opportunities are likely available only to property owners with relatively more financial resources.

Exhibit 33 How did you pay for the construction of the ADU? Select all that apply. (n=336)



Parking

Since off-street parking is no longer required for an ADU, we were interested to ask respondents about the number of vehicles associated with their ADU and where the ADU occupant parks. This provides one measure of potential parking outcomes related to ADU production. Exhibit 34 shows that 19 percent of respondents reported zero vehicles associated with the ADU occupant, and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) reported that the occupant(s) owned one vehicle. Exhibit 35 shows the number of vehicles that the ADU residents typically park on the street. Almost half (46 percent) do not typically park on the street, well above the 19 percent who don't own a vehicle, which suggests these many residents have access to off-street parking. A similar share (44 percent) park one vehicle on the street, and only 8 percent park two or more vehicles on the street.

Exhibit 34 How many vehicles do the ADU residents own? (n=234)

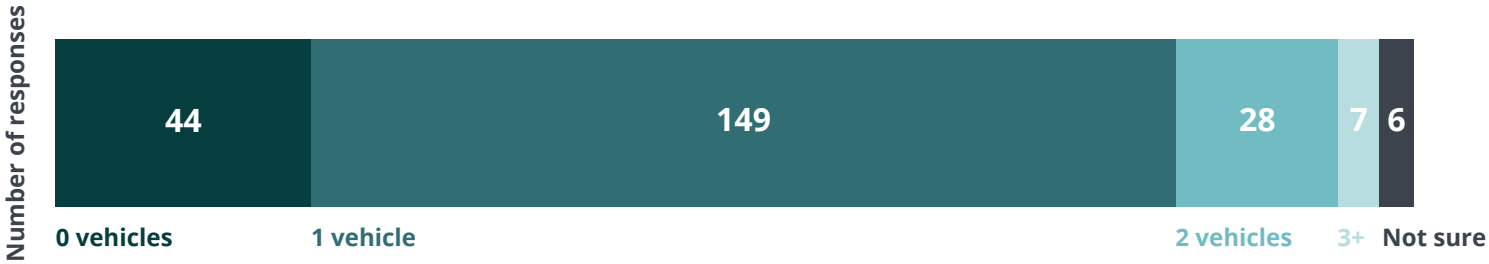
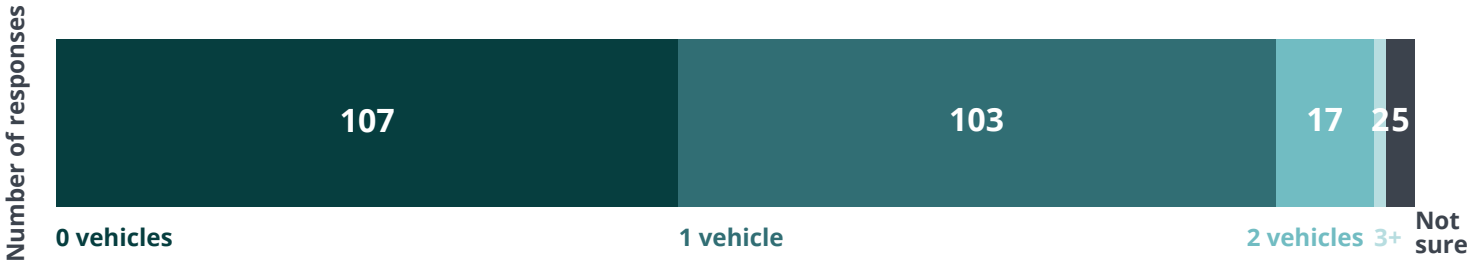


Exhibit 35 How many vehicles do the ADU residents typically park on the street? (n=234)



Open-ended feedback from respondents

We also asked respondents to describe any particularly positive or negative aspects about the process of building their ADU. The following is an excerpt of responses that highlight common themes.

Positive aspects about the process of building your ADU:

More flexible regulations

That the owner occupant requirement was removed after we permitted and recorded owner occupancy documents. We were concerned about renting or selling the house in the future with that stipulation.

Expanded housing choices

Having affordable housing in city option.

I bought the property, which had a large workshop, specifically with the goal to someday make it a dwelling place. I am a big proponent of "infill building" in cities. I would love to sell my DADU with the property it sits on, which would be wonderful way to create a new homeowner and allow me to monetize my property as I age. (I am 70 years old.)

I've done long and short term rentals. I enjoy the people and providing the service. I like having others in the house for safety and socialization. The extra income is helpful in an increasingly expensive city.

Support through the permitting process

The city of Seattle DCI was so helpful. I cannot stress enough how much they held my hand through the process of planning, permitting and construction. Whenever I had a question, I'd call and they'd advise me what they wanted to see. If there were two choices, I'd ask them, and they'd let me know which was going to be more cost effective. They truly were integral to making it a success.

Ability to meet family & household needs

Overall, the city was responsive during permitting process and construction inspections. We love Dadu but found it was very costly to build. It is being used by elderly parent. Very happy to have parent nearby to help with aging/ health issues. We began process before city released approved dadu designs due to time constraints. If we were to do again, would use preapproved designs.

Ability to build a long term handicap accessible home for my mother (who does not have any disabilities currently but wanted a place that she could remain in should she develop disabilities as she aged)

My parents -- who are aging -- can now live independently in their own cottage in our back yard. We are close enough to keep an eye on them and have lots of interactions with them, but each household can have its own privacy. I am also glad that my parents have moved from rural Thurston County to the City of Seattle, where grocery stores, doctors' offices, and libraries are a quick drive or bus ride away.

Seeing the progress & improvements to our home! We are inspiring our neighbors but warn them of the challenges with the city of Seattle, expense & cost of contractors and materials. We did some of the work, but it was a long & expensive process.

Negative aspects about the process of building your ADU:

Challenges navigating the permitting process

Deeply frustrating delays, miscommunication with City re. electrical service which may require costly de-construction and re-work. Most people we've worked with have been professional and courteous but the process has failed us.

Learning how difficult it is to permit through the City of Seattle

I started ADU before the city's website and other initiatives to make it easier. As a newbie it was a tedious process to understand the legalities and what different terms/requirements were. It was also very inconvenient to have to go to the office downtown to address these questions/concerns.

Permitting took too long. Needed an arborist to talk about a tree which is exceptional.

It's long, expensive, and the city makes it harder and harder to rent property as a private owner.

Requirements for small projects

*Permitting for an AADU currently works more like construction on a new residential structure than it does a simple interior renovation, despite all the changes needed being enhancements of existing house systems (plumbing, electrical, walls, finishes). Documentation requirements are very opaque and there aren't good resources/checklists covering what is needed (from FAR and lot coverage area calculations on a *basement* unit, to full floor plan diagrams with bathroom fan CFMs and exhaust pipe routing, window dimensions, etc.). I learned of these additional requirements by failing document review several times, despite always responding to 100% of correction requests. If these requirements are going to stay this onerous, the city needs to be exhaustive on feedback to allow applicants to efficiently learn/respond to those requirements.*

Building before the 2019 ADU reforms

The city required 50% ownership had to live in house when I applied in 2017. So had to create LLC with daughter and have her live there. Shortly after 2018 city changed/eliminated requirement.

Unexpected costs

We didn't realize that we would be issued a huge bill from the sewer treatment company. We didn't add any bathrooms, but our 2nd bathroom was now a primary bathroom for our ADU so we got a bill for the change in status. We didn't see that one coming. It would have been nice to know beforehand.

Cost of construction more than expected. Covid shortages in materials and labor made the process longer and more expensive.

Impacts from living near construction

It's a long time to have a construction site in the backyard. The DADU utilities connect to our house, which has negatively impacted our main home. For example, to tap into water, they drilled a hole into our foundation, and the very heavy rains following the Christmas snow last year cause the hole to leak. And even though we are lucky to be able to afford to build, it's still really expensive.

6 Ongoing work

OPCD and SDCI will continue to monitor ADU permitting and outcomes, with a particular focus on topics where systematic analysis is not currently possible and manual review of data is necessary. This includes:

- reviewing sales records from the King County Assessor to gain further insights into the price range for and relative affordability of ADUs sold as condos
- continuing analysis currently underway of ADU plan sets to identify unit characteristics (like height, size, and lot coverage); provision of off-street parking; and retention, planting, and removal of trees

This annual report also informs the City's related ongoing work on housing affordability. OPCD and SDCI support Mayor Harrell's housing subcabinet, an interdepartmental effort to removing barriers to housing production. OPCD is also leading the One Seattle Plan, a major update of the City's Comprehensive Plan, where housing choice and affordability is a primary theme. As part of the plan update, we are currently studying further reforms to Neighborhood Residential zones to increase the variety and supply of housing across Seattle neighborhoods.

We are also continuing to explore how we can support more equitable use of ADUs by helping lower- and moderate-income residents be able to own or live in an ADU. One strategy is to provide supports and resources to address the financial and other barriers that keep many homeowners of color from investing in their property as a way to build wealth and stay in place. In 2020, we began developing an affordable ADU loan pilot program focused on this objective, but funding was reallocated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This remains a priority for OPCD, particularly as we look ahead to new housing opportunities unlocked through the One Seattle Plan. Our vision of success involves empowering existing residents to access these redevelopment opportunities so they can remain and participate in the evolution of their communities.



Best Practice Architecture / Sozinho Imagery

maps.seattle.gov/ADU

Cover Image: CAST Architecture / Cindy Apple Photography

City of Seattle