



HousingWorks

AUSTIN

June 16, 2015

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Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, and Council Members Houston, Garza, Renteria, Casar, Kitchen, Zimmerman, Pool, Troxclair, and Gallo,

At the July 18, 2015, city council meeting, you will consider an ordinance amending provisions of the land development code related to accessory dwelling units (ADUs). HousingWorks is extremely supportive of encouraging a diversity of housing types that respond to the need of our city's diverse households. Accordingly, we would like to offer our support for the recommendations that were approved by both the Planning Commission and the Community Development Commission.

HousingWorks recognizes that relaxing ADU development standards will not automatically result in deep or widespread affordability. However, simplified rules – coupled with additional tools such as pre-approved, off-the-shelf ADU plans and, as recommended by the Community Development Commission, resources to help low-income owners finance ADUs, or any owners that will build ADUs for low-income tenants – could go a long way toward achieving greater affordability at a variety of income levels across the city.

In addition, it is important to note that the 2008 Affordable Housing Incentives Task Force produced a variety of recommendations around affordability, many of which were ultimately adopted by city council. Section 25-2-1407 of the Land Development Code specifically allows increased entitlements for ADUs, provided a minimum of 10% of the units are affordable to households earning 60% MFI or less. The affordability restrictions are required for a minimum of 20 years. This underutilized section of the code could be a mechanism to achieve greater geographic distribution of affordable ADUs. We encourage the city to pursue more widespread utilization of this provision of the code, as increased entitlements should be accompanied by affordability requirements.

Finally, it is essential to look at land use regulations in a holistic manor. Accordingly, we encourage the city to explore comprehensive changes through the CodeNEXT process. HousingWorks has been actively involved in CodeNEXT since its inception, and we look forward to prioritizing the code rewrite and meeting the established schedule for code revision, adoption, mapping, and implementation.

Thank you for your commitment to affordability. If you have any questions, or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (512) 454-1444.

Sincerely,

Mandy De Mayo
Executive Director