



To: Jenn Gress, Planner, Development Services

From: Eran Pehan, Director, Office of Housing & Community Development

Date: June 30, 2020

RE: Agency Comment on Title 20 Amendment Package

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In “A Place to Call Home,” Missoula’s adopted citywide housing policy, one entire section of recommendations relate to enabling Missoula homeowners to construct Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). In a section of recommendations under the header “Reduce Barriers to New Supply and Promote Access to Affordable Homes,” the policy speaks to the purpose of implementing these changes related to ADUs and their ability to lower the cost of construction, incentivize development of rent-controlled homes, and promote accessible rental infill in all areas of the city.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) (sometimes known as granny flats, Fonzie flats, or alley houses) are one of the most ecologically sound ways to develop new homes. They help reduce carbon dioxide and other pollutants that cause climate change by increasing urban density and requiring fewer natural resources to build and operate than a standard-sized home. And because ADUs are generally smaller than typical single-family homes, they use fewer natural resources to build and less energy to heat and cool. This approach is also more resource efficient for local governments. By utilizing existing city infrastructure, it combines an ecological and financial benefit when compared to costly infrastructure expansion at the urban fringe. The deployment of ADUs in existing neighborhoods also reduces the need for automotive transportation—a source of about 25% of greenhouse gases—and supports alternative modes of transportation such as walking, biking, and public transit. In 2013, Missoula’s City Council passed Ordinance 3493 establishing standards for developing new ADUs in the City of Missoula, with the intent to encourage production. Yet fewer than 25 ADUs have been permitted and constructed since adoption. In the spring of 2018 the code was updated to remove ADUs as a conditionally approved use, the first step towards making ADU development more accessible. One of the primary remaining obstacles to adoption are several code-related obstacles addressed in these Title 20 Amendments.

The Office of Housing & Community Development strongly recommends the approval of the proposed Amendment Package for Title 20 of Missoula’s code. The wider adoption of ADU development represents a housing approach strongly aligned with not only the City’s housing policy, but also the City’s Focus Inward growth policy, and several goals related to conservation and climate action. But perhaps more importantly, these changes will open up more diverse home options all over our city by providing some flexibility in the type of ADU that can be constructed, while maintaining existing design guidelines to ensure accessory structures still fit within existing neighborhood character. By increasing access to ADUs, we will enable a greater number of Missoula homeowners to feasibly include an ADU on their property in order to age in place, support aging parents, or earn rental income to help pay their mortgages.