



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

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**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL      DATE: DECEMBER 10, 2024**

**FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT      WARDS: ALL**  
**DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: DWELL RIVERSIDE – UPDATE ON ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU)**  
**PROGRAM INCLUDING PERMIT-READY ADU PLANS**

## **ISSUE**

Receive and file an update on the City's efforts to promote and facilitate Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) including presentation of the Dwell Riverside Permit-Ready ADU Plans and outline of next steps.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the City Council receive and file an update on the City's efforts to promote and facilitate Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) including presentation of the Dwell Riverside Permit-Ready ADU Plans and next steps.

## **LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

Assembly Bill (AB) 2299 and Senate Bill (SB) 1069 (Attachment 1) were signed into law on September 27, 2016, which allowed a local agency, by ordinance, to provide for the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADU) in single-family and multifamily residential zones. The bills aimed to simplify and streamline the approval processes for homeowners wishing to construct ADUs, thereby increasing the availability of neighborhood-scale affordable housing options.

SB 2 (Attachment 2) was signed into law on September 29, 2017, known as the Building Homes and Jobs Act, which established a funding source for affordable housing initiatives via fees on real estate transactions. Under SB 2, fifty percent (50%) of fees collected in the first year (2018) were to be allocated to local governments to help streamline housing production including policy streamlining and the introduction of new residential development tools.

Assembly Bill 1332 (Attachment 3) was signed into law on October 11, 2023, which created the requirement for each local agency to develop and implement a program for the preapproval of ADU plans by no later than January 2025.

## **BACKGROUND**

In recent years, California has faced a severe housing shortage, which prompted the State of

California (State) to implement various legislative measures aimed at facilitating the construction of affordable housing options. Among these initiatives were Assembly and Senate bills supporting the creation of ADUs, which have become a crucial component in addressing housing affordability and scarcity. In 2018, the State authorized SB 2-generated revenue as part of the Planning Grants Program (PGP) and issued a Notice of Funding Available (NOFA), allowing “over the counter” allocations to jurisdictions. As a large jurisdiction, the City of Riverside (City) was eligible for up to \$625,000 in PGP funds for planning efforts that demonstrate a nexus to accelerating housing production.

In response to these State laws, the City adopted its own ADU Ordinance in 2017. This ordinance was designed to comply with state regulations while also addressing local housing needs, providing clear guidelines for property owners wishing to construct ADUs. Additionally, in February 2019, the City approved ADU regulations to align with the updated State laws. This approval signified a commitment from the City to facilitate the creation of more housing units by making the permitting process for ADUs more accessible. The City has also engaged in this legislative landscape, particularly with the approval of its 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element (HE) Implementation Program on December 29, 2017. The HE is a strategic plan guiding the City in meeting its housing needs over an eight-year cycle, as mandated by the State. The HE focuses on garnering community input, assessing housing needs, and planning for various types of housing, including affordable housing and ADUs as a viable solution for increasing housing stock. In October 2021, the City adopted the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle update to the Housing Element, which included Implementation Action HE-5.1. This action focused on refining the strategies for producing more ADUs and ensuring compliance with ongoing developments in state legislation.

In 2019, the City began collecting data on the approval of ADU permits to understand trends and effectiveness in increasing housing supply. This data is crucial for evaluating the success of ADU policies and creating future housing strategies. From 2019 through September 2024, 835 ADUs and JADUs have been permitted throughout the City with another 156 units in the permit pipeline, and production has increased consistently each year over year. Like many other cities, ADUs have also become a key component of the City’s overall housing strategy, considering the reality that addressing the City’s housing needs will require production of new housing of all types and at all scales.

The timeline of California ADU legislation and the City's HE illustrates a proactive approach to combatting the housing crisis through local and state collaborations. By embracing ADUs as an effective strategy for increasing housing supply at both the legislative and local implementation levels, the City has aligned itself with State goals to increase accessible housing while accommodating community needs and ensure the City meets the AB 1332 requirement of having pre-approved plans by January 2025.

## **DISCUSSION:**

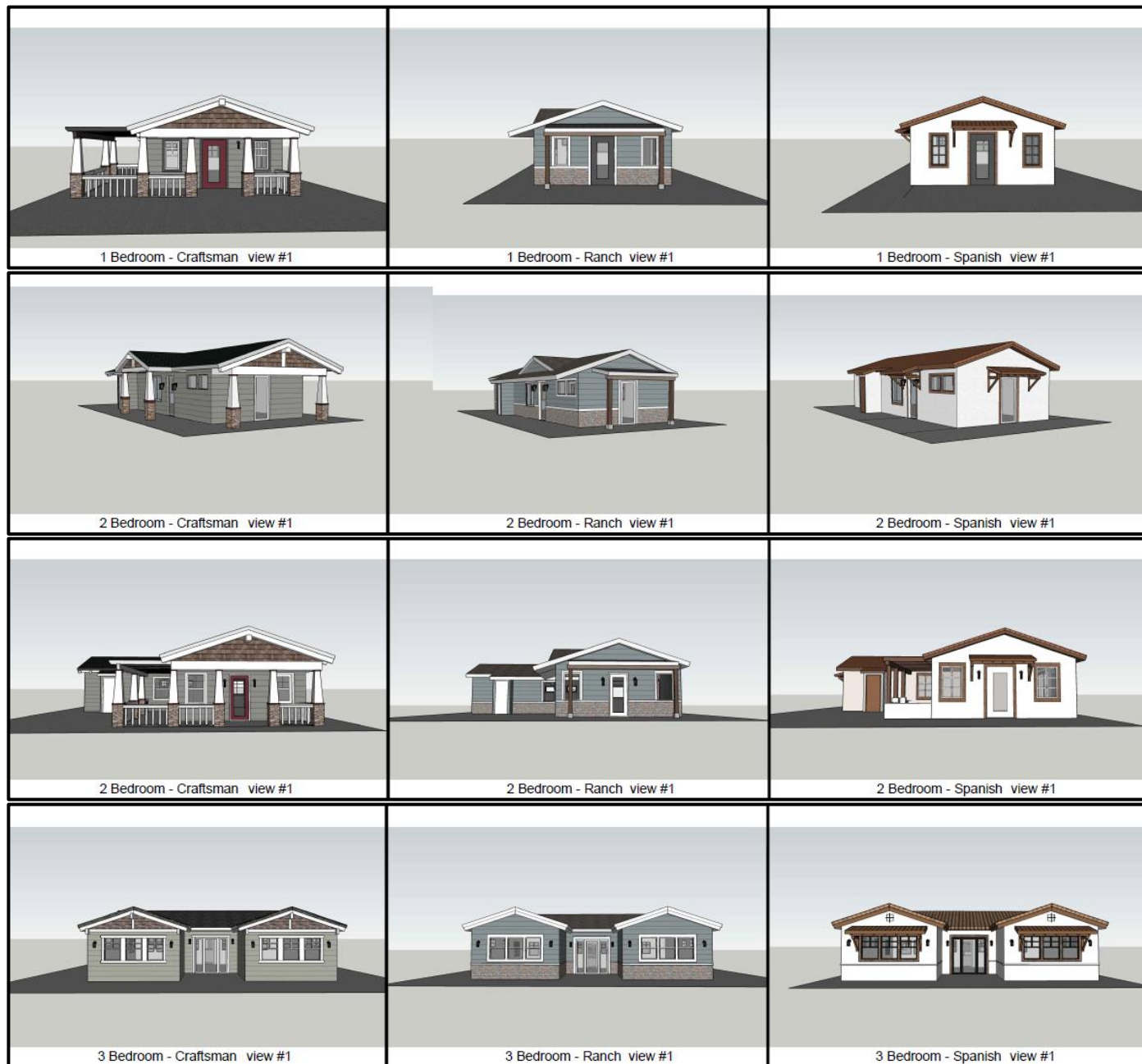
In 2019, the City’s Community & Economic Development Department enlisted the assistance of the consulting firm Sagecrest Planning and Environmental to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) for professional design and engineering services aimed at developing a set of permit-ready plans for ADUs.

In December 2019, the City was awarded \$625,000 in SB 2 funds for a variety of projects intended to accelerate housing production, which included funds to streamline the production of ADUs. In September 2023, the City awarded a contract to Design Path Studio (DPS) for preparation of

standard ADU construction plans. From fall 2023 through summer 2024, the designs were finalized, approved by City staff and the development of the Permit Ready ADU and Permit Ready Express ADU program began.

DPS created documents for newly built detached ADUs in the following sizes and configurations:

ADU Type	Size
One Bedroom	746 sq. ft.
Two Bedroom	800 sq. ft.
Two Bedroom	1,020 sq. ft.
Three Bedroom	1,200 sq. ft.



The ADU plans consist of construction-ready drawings and supporting documents in compliance with all applicable codes and regulations including, at minimum:

- Cover sheet with applicable data, notes, sheet index and code analysis;
- Specifications;
- Floor plans;
- Foundation plans suitable for all soil conditions;
- Framing plans and cross sections;
- Plumbing, mechanical and electrical plans, including new service upgrade option;
- Exterior elevations with finish material specifications;
- Structural details;
- Construction notes and calculations to meet all code requirements;
- List of deferred submittals under separate permits (such as fire sprinklers and solar photovoltaics);
- Optional standards for Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones; and
- Optional standards for noise attenuation.

The City has initiated an innovative program called Dwell Riverside, which is specifically designed to expedite the approval process for ADUs constructed using these permit-ready plans. The plans are now available at <https://riversideca.gov/cedd/building-safety/standard-plans-details> and can be used to immediately open new opportunities to expand housing availability at reduced cost from and shorter review timeframes.

Dwell Riverside simplifies the application and submission process for homeowners looking to develop ADUs using one of the permit-ready plan sets by creating a streamlined experience that enhances efficiency and clarity. This approach helps mitigate common pitfalls that often result in application rejections or delays, such as incomplete documentation or misunderstandings related to local regulations.

The central feature of Dwell Riverside is the carefully curated selection of pre-approved ADU designs, which are compliant with local regulations and building codes. The creation and availability of the permit-ready plans also provide a significant savings to homeowners in terms of preconstruction costs for architecture and engineering services. The permit-ready plans also significantly shorten the approval timeline because they have already undergone thorough assessment for code compliance required for construction. Homeowners are thus empowered to make quicker decisions about their projects, minimizing uncertainty while maximizing aesthetic choice. The availability of these designs not only simplifies the planning process but also helps homeowners envision their future spaces with greater clarity, as they can immediately see which options are feasible and compliant.

Dwell Riverside streamlines the ADU review and approval process and reduces the delays typically associated with traditional pathways, resulting in significantly shorter wait times. This expedited process not only enhances homeowner satisfaction but also contributes to the broader community goal of increasing affordable housing options. By ensuring that projects can move forward more quickly and at a lower up-front cost, DWELL Riverside plays a crucial role in alleviating housing shortages and responding effectively to the growing demand for flexible living spaces. Additionally, the City developed an Express Permit-Ready Submittal program. This streamlined pathway will further simplify the process for homeowners with qualifying properties by assisting with preparing a property-specific site plan, waiving certain technical reports, and making it possible to obtain a permit to start construction in as few as two visits to the One Stop Shop. The launch of the Express Permit-Ready Submittal program will provide qualified homeowners even more cost and time savings. Overall, DWELL Riverside represents a comprehensive solution that simplifies the ADU development journey, making it more accessible and efficient for homeowners

Enhancements and next steps to DWELL Riverside include the creation of a “How to ADU” guidebook, development of standard drawings for garage conversions and set up a series of workshops.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

This item contributes to the following Envision Riverside 2025 **Strategic Priority 2 – Community Well-Being** (Goal 2.1 – Facilitate the development of a quality and diverse housing supply that is available and affordable to a wide range of income levels. In addition, the item aligns with the following Cross-Cutting Threads:

1. **Community Trust** – Permit-ready ADU plans provide improved transparency and reduced processing time for permit applicants and homeowners.
2. **Equity** – Standardized, permit-ready ADU plans reduce barriers, including costs, for homeowners, including those in environmental justice communities, and create the opportunity to expand the City’s supply of attainable housing.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The permit-ready ADU plans take advantage of generous State planning grant programs and have no direct cost to the City.
4. **Innovation** – Standardized, permit-ready ADU plans are widely considered to be a best practice in housing policy.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Permit-ready plans have been designed to the current highest California Green Building Standards Code (CalGreen), while promoting a compact, walkable development pattern of infill construction for housing growth.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact related to the receipt and filing of this action.

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Approved as to form: Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Assembly Bill 2299
2. Senate Bill 1069
3. Senate Bill 2
4. Assembly Bill 1332
5. PowerPoint Presentation