



TOOLBOX Resource Sheet

Streamlining Housing with Pre-Approved ADU Plans

May 9, 2025

Background

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are a key strategy for expanding housing options in central Puget Sound communities, but the cost and complexity of ADUs may limit the number built in the region. Pre-approved ADU plans can help overcome some of these challenges by streamlining the permitting process and reducing design expenses for residents. Pre-approved ADU plan sets are designed to comply with local development standards and design requirements, reviewed for compliance, and designated as “pre-approved” by the jurisdiction.

Across the country, jurisdictions have adopted a range of pre-approved ADU plan programs. While each program is unique, most fall into one of two common models:

1. **Open Submission or Design Competition:** The jurisdiction issues a call for plan submissions or hosts a design competition. Selected plans are pre-approved by the jurisdiction and are shared with the public. Residents contact the architect directly to purchase the rights to use a plan and may also hire the architect to prepare a site plan for submittal. Residents may choose to work with the architect to make modifications to the plan, although depending on the changes this may compromise the pre-approval status.
 - Eugene, OR: [Pre-Approved Accessory Dwelling Unit Program](#) (hybrid approach that also includes one [city-owned plan for free](#))
 - Leavenworth, WA: [Pre-Approved Housing Plans](#)
 - San Antonio, TX: [Casita Permit-Ready Plan Library](#) (includes a [plan pre-approved for use in historic districts](#))
 - San Jose, CA: [Preapproved ADUs](#)
 - Raleigh, NC: [ADU Fast Track Program](#)
2. **Jurisdiction-Commissioned Designs:** The jurisdiction hires an architect to develop pre-approved ADU plans. The jurisdiction retains ownership of the plans, which are typically offered to residents at no cost. This model can be more affordable for residents but offers less flexibility, as jurisdictions typically have no way to facilitate even minor modifications.
 - Kirkland, WA: [Pre-Approved DADUs](#)
 - Lacey, WA: [Permit-Ready ADUs](#)
 - Los Angeles County, CA: [Pre-Approved ADU Standard Plans](#)
 - Port Angeles, WA: [Permit-Ready Plans Program](#)
 - San Benito County, CA: [County Pre-Approved ADU Building Plans](#)





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Resources from Session Speakers

Washington State Department of Commerce

[Guidance for Accessory Dwelling Units in Washington State](#): Commerce's guidance provides a wealth of information on ADU implementation, including state ADU requirements and information about programmatic elements including pre-approved ADU plans.

Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council and City of Poulsbo

[Pre-Approved ADU Plans](#): KRCC is undergoing collaborative work to develop pre-approved ADU plans for use across Kitsap County, including in the cities of Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, Port Orchard, and Poulsbo. Four sets of plans have currently been released for use across Kitsap County, with two more sets coming soon. See how the City of Poulsbo has used these plans [here](#).

City of Renton

[Permit Ready ADU \(PRADU\) Program](#): The City of Renton offers free ADU model base plans for residential property owners within the city's jurisdictional boundary. Staff work with property owners one-on-one to determine project feasibility, including ADU placement, potential barriers, and next steps to prepare applicants for an expedited review process.

City of Seattle

[Pre-Approved DADUs](#): The City of Seattle hosted a pre-approved ADU design competition and in 2020 selected 10 plans for pre-approval. More information about the guidelines for the design competition is available [here](#). Residents can contact the plan designer to license the plan and licensing fees are capped at \$1,000. Since 2020, 197 pre-approved ADUs have been permitted in Seattle and the permitting timeline was reduced by 39%. More information about ADUs, including pre-approved plans, is available in the City's [Accessory Dwelling Unit 2023 Report](#).

Additional Resources

- [Challenges in Pre-Approved Building Plans Webinar](#) | Congress for New Urbanism
- [Expanding ADU Development and Occupancy: Solutions for Removing Local Barriers to ADU Construction](#) | AARP and APA
- [Pattern Zones and Pre-Reviewed Homes \(Zoning Practice Vol. 41 No. 1\)](#) | APA
- [New ADU Tools May Unlock Affordable Housing in Your Backyard](#) | APA Planning Magazine



Puget Sound Regional Council