

From: [Rebecca Messinger](#)
To: [Oliver Orijako](#); [Jose Alvarez](#); [Sonja Wisser](#)
Subject: FW: Snohomish County opens ADUs to rural and resource areas
Date: Tuesday, July 25, 2023 8:50:53 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
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[image004.png](#)

Please see the public comments below. Thank you.



Rebecca Messinger
Clerk to the Council
COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE

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From: Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, July 25, 2023 8:32 AM
To: Rebecca Messinger <Rebecca.Messinger@clark.wa.gov>; Tina Redline <Tina.Redline@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: FW: Snohomish County opens ADUs to rural and resource areas



Kathleen Otto
County Manager

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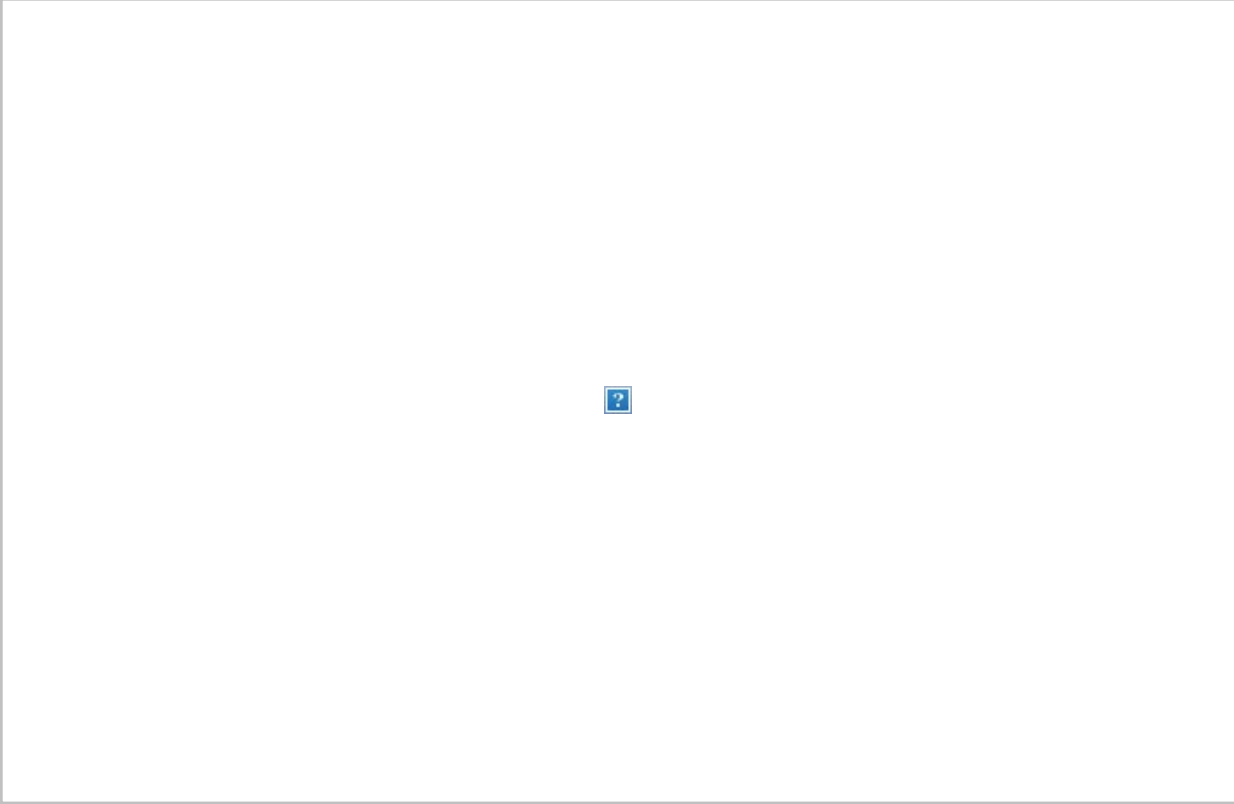
From: Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <ccuinc@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, July 24, 2023 9:27 PM
To: Karen Bowerman <Karen.Bowerman@clark.wa.gov>; Gary Medvigy <Gary.Medvigy@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: Snohomish County opens ADUs to rural and resource areas

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- FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD
- FROM CLARK COUNTY CITIZENS UNITED, INC.

JULY 24, 2023

Welcome News For Rural Snohomish County Property Owners in Need of Housing for Senior Adults



EVERETT — In the midst of a housing crisis, Snohomish County Council members voted unanimously this week to ease restrictions on rural “mother-in-law” units.

Their hope is that the units will be one more option for people needing a place to call home, particularly for aging residents and households living with multiple generations.

With the change in code, rural parcels as small as 25,000 square feet can have detached accessory dwelling units, or ADUs. Council members also nixed the so-called “100-foot rule” requiring units to be built close to the main house.

“The vast majority of the folks I hear from are using these for family members,” Councilmember Nate Nehring told The Daily Herald. “Mostly older relatives.”

The new code applies to rural and resource zones. Nehring, whose sprawling northeast district is largely rural, spearheaded the change.

In 2012, Snohomish County prohibited detached ADUs on lots smaller than 5 acres. Since officials don’t break up rural land into parcels that small anymore, existing ones have been deemed “substandard.”

But a housing crisis has mounted since then, prompting the county to rethink ADUs. Between 2010 and 2017, the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in the county increased by 49.5%. Median household income went up

less than 18%.

A 2020 report by the county Housing Affordability Regional Taskforce identified ADUs as a solution. In June last year, council members eased some requirements to encourage ADUs in more urban areas. [Cities have been doing the same](#), hoping the housing niche can ease financial burdens.

Now the county hopes cutting more restrictions will give rural residents more opportunity “to age in place, care for family members and earn a modest supplemental income,” county documents say. Detached ADUs can be up to 1,200 square feet and have to match the aesthetic of the primary home.

In written public testimony, a Woodinville-area resident said it was a “complete shock” to find out she couldn’t build a detached unit for her aging mother, since her property was deemed “substandard” due to its size. Stanwood-area resident Joseph Rye told council members the 100-foot rule “just doesn’t make sense” and limits housing options.

The code change comes as Snohomish County [prepares to update its comprehensive plan](#). One long-term goal is to tamp down population growth in rural areas. County officials don’t expect looser ADU restrictions to have a significant impact on that.

Between 2012 and 2019, the county only issued permits for 100 new rural ADUs. Those accounted for just 3.3% of new housing units.

The new ordinance also excludes shoreline properties in an attempt to retain “rural character.” County documents describe waterfront properties as “more prone to experience pressure to develop with vacation residences or short-term rentals.”

Nehring said he’s not hearing from any constituents looking to build ADUs as “moneymakers” anyway.

“Every single constituent outreach I’ve received is related to family, or people already living there,” he said. “That’s been the public desire.”

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