

## City of East Providence adopts new accessory dwelling unit ordinance - by Roberto DaSilva

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On Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025, the East Providence City Council unanimously approved several modifications to the city's zoning ordinance that were required to conform to land use bills approved by the RI General Assembly in 2024. These bills were passed to create additional opportunities for new housing construction throughout the state. The most notable of these changes for East Providence residents is the adoption of new zoning regulations that allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's). These units are accessory to existing dwelling units and may be located either completely inside an existing home, attached to an existing home, or may be part of a separate

structure such as a detached garage or separate cottage.

State law does not require a minimum lot size for ADU's that are entirely within the footprint of an existing residential structure. However, the law permits a detached ADU on lots of 20,000 s/f or more as a matter of right. During their deliberations, the city council went beyond the state law's minimum requirement and required only 5,000 s/f of land for the construction of a detached unit. The council noted that in a dense community like East Providence, this opens up the option for more homeowners, creating more opportunities for residents to access affordable housing.

ADU's offer benefits to many types of residents. AARP strongly supports them as a way to help senior homeowners with rental income and to utilize extra space within their homes. Seniors may even move into the smaller space and rent the larger house to a tenant or other family member. ADU's are also an excellent option for young adults entering the workforce. In fact, many older adults began their independence by renting an accessory unit from either family or other property owners. ADU's are often the only rental options in exclusively single-family residential neighborhoods. Compared to larger residential development, ADU's have little impact on existing neighborhoods with less impact on natural resources and neighborhood character.

The current housing crisis is burdening residents of all ages and is negatively impacting the region's economy. In East Providence, 50% of renters are considered "cost burdened," and the state as a whole is last in housing construction per capita. Solving the housing crisis is a nationwide goal and ADU's are one tool that will help East Providence residents deal with its impacts.

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