

Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio
CONVERGENCE Columbus
RISE Together Innovation Institute

ADU SUPPORT SPRINT 2025

A final report and community guidebook summarizing results

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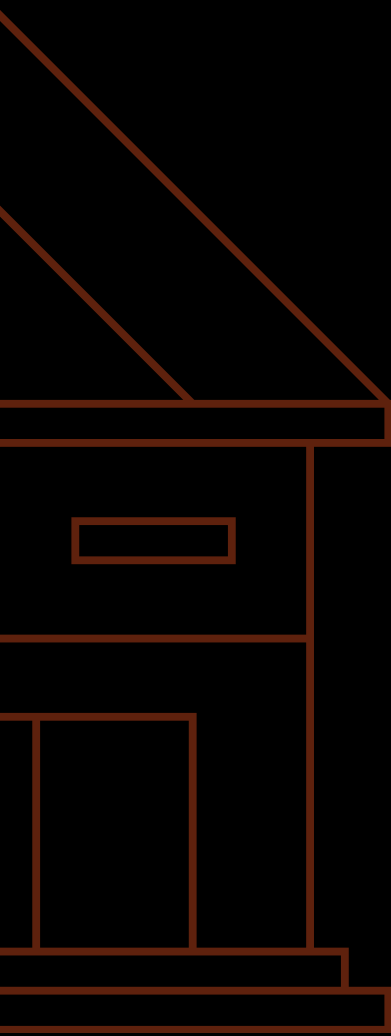


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Letter from the Co-Hosts



**Keryna
Johnson**

RISE Together
Innovation Institute

"As a self-proclaimed ADU evangelist, it's been an incredible joy to witness the energy, creativity, and commitment each of you brought to this spring's ADU Sprint. From policy ideas to homeowner education, your contributions are helping to lay the foundation for more accessible, sustainable housing across Franklin County.

On behalf of RISE Together Innovation Institute, thank you for being part of this movement. Together, we're not just expanding what's possible, we're building the future of housing, one small but awesome unit at a time."

"For a long time we've said that there's no single tool that will solve Central Ohio's housing challenge. That's absolutely true. We need to focus on strategies that can build a variety of housing options that fit any family's budget, that expand homeownership and wealth building, and that create pathways to economic mobility and financial security for all. Both the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio, and the CONVERGENCE Columbus coalition believe that Accessory Dwelling Units sit at the intersection of those needs and deserve serious consideration and purposeful planning to broaden their impacts in our region. It was a privilege to join this sprint that will spark our region's ADU creativity and support our growth!"



Carlie J. Boos

CONVERGENCE
Columbus & Affordable
Housing Alliance of
Central Ohio

Objective & Structure



Vision

To collaboratively advance outreach, programs, and strategies that support the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in Franklin County.

Structure

A full-participant convening and kick-off session in March 2025. Followed by ten weeks of facilitated small team sprints on specific ADU opportunities. Concluding with a virtual report-out and celebration in June.

Sprint Topics

- **Education:** Raise awareness & provide clear information on ADUs.
- **Policy:** Identify regulatory barriers & advocate for ADU-friendly policies.
- **Finance:** Explore ways to make ADUs financially accessible to the public.
- **Design:** Address practical ADU development needs.

Sprint Members

Facilitators and co-hosts for the sprint were staff from the RISE Together Innovation Institute, the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio, and CONVERGENCE Columbus. The work product and conclusions contained in this report do not necessarily represent the positions of the facilitators and are instead a reflection of a small group of community partners starting a complex, but important, discussion on ADUs in our community. Operational support and convening sponsorship was provided by RED One Realty, Healthy Homes/Nationwide Children's Hospital, and Omni Title.

Nearly forty individuals representing twenty-four professional organizations joined the sprint:

- AARP Ohio
- Astra Studios
- CareSource
- Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging
- Central Ohio Community Land Trust
- City of Columbus
- Clark Custom Builders
- Coalition on Homelessness & Housing in Ohio
- Columbus City Council
- Columbus REALTORS
- Gertrude Wood Community Foundation
- Greater Ohio Policy Center
- Huntington National Bank
- Just Listed Real Estate
- NOMA Columbus
- Nationwide Children's Hospital
- Omni Title
- Park National Bank
- Red 1 Realty
- Spring Garden Lending
- Take a Look Real Estate Brokers
- U.S. Dpt. of Housing & Urban Development
- Wright-Patt Credit Union
- Y2 Design & Build



Sprint Team: Education & Awareness



The team's goal was to raise awareness & provide clear information on ADUs. It identified three priority projects it would use the sprint period to execute: a map and database of local ADU projects, a public educational webinar on ADU dynamics, and a video/photo tour of an ADU home.

Map & Database

The sprint team compiled public records data to map ADUs that applied for and received a City of Columbus permit. [The map is available here for public review.](#) This represents permitted, not necessarily completed, projects. It includes the address, zoning class, parking changes, and project status where known. Additional notes on style (ex. "garage conversion") are provided.

An [accompanying matrix with](#) photos, application materials, and architecture details is also available for public viewing.

Webinar

The webinar project was "owned" by sprint team members at AARP Ohio. A webinar, hosted in conjunction with consultants Opticos, is planned for July 2025. Invitations will be shared as available.

Video Tour

A video tour was completed by Janene Parham highlighting an ADU owned by Kathy Green. The resource is presented on the following pages.

ADU Virtual Tour

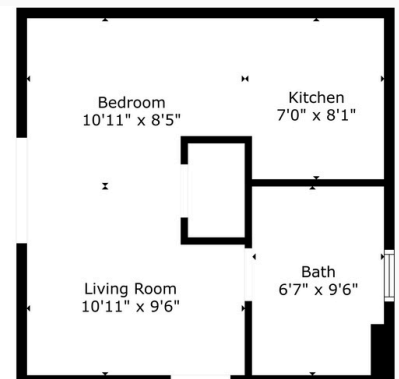
Take a Digital Look at an ADU in Columbus' Coveted Schumacher Place Neighborhood

Whether you're planning an Accessory Dwelling Unit and are looking for design ideas, or if you're just curious to see how these innovative homes can look in a Central Ohio neighborhood, this digital tour is a great starting place. Local ADU owner and enthusiast, Kathy Green, collaborated with Janene Parham of Red 1 Realty to share this digital tour of 458 East Whitter, in the heart of Columbus' South Side.



Video Walk-Through of 458 East Whitter

The East Whitter ADU is 322 square feet on a single floor. It contains one bedroom, with connected living room and kitchen areas, private bath, and hidden utilities. It has a large patio overlooking the neighborhood. Designed with ADA accessibility in mind, the unit utilizes universal design principles. It is within walking distance of German Village destinations including Schiller Park, Schmidt's Sausage Haus and Restaurant, and the Book Loft. The ADU, "creates a space for a nurse or someone working at Children's Hospital to not have to rent or take over a property in some other way," says Green. The primary structure is a classic brick Italianate built in 1904.





Exterior



Bedroom Area



Sitting Area



Sitting Area



Bathroom



Kitchen



Patio



Rear Entry

Sprint Team: Policy

05



Team Goals

The Policy Sprint Team's goal was to identify regulatory barriers to ADU construction and create a foundation for advocates to support ADU-friendly policies

83% ↗

of Central Ohioans support passing housing rules that allow owners of single-family homes to add a separate apartment over their garage or in their backyard.

85% ↗

of Central Ohioans support requiring local governments to use a quick and clear process for making decisions about building permits

Projects

The team identified two priority projects: creating a benchmarking matrix to compare city-by-city zoning regulations and a guide to help navigate ADU utility connections.

80% ↗

of Central Ohioans support passing housing rules that allow owners of single-family homes to convert a space like their basement or attic into an apartment.

78% ↗

of Central Ohioans support allowing Missing Middle housing on all residential lots.

ADU Zoning Benchmark

A Quick & Simple Matrix for Policymakers to see ADU Regulations in Selected Peer Cities

The purpose of this research brief is to educate policymakers on a variety of zoning regulations that govern ADUs in Central Ohio and peer cities. This is not a comprehensive list and these regulations are not intended to represent Sprint Team recommendations or industry best practices, they are merely the beginning of an educational tool to benchmark Franklin County policies against those in other regions.

	Front Yard Setback	Side Yard Setback	Rear Yard Setback	Parking
Portland, OR	Same as principal building	Base zone applies	Base zone applies	No off-street parking required
San Diego, CA	Base zone applies	Zero-foot setbacks if ≤16 ft. height; 4-foot setbacks if adjacent to residential uses & >16 ft. height	Zero-foot setbacks if ≤16 ft. height; 4-foot setbacks if adjacent to residential uses & >16 ft. height	None within “Sustainable Development Areas”; 1 space per dwelling outside these areas for 3rd and 4th units
Austin, TX	Front setback of primary structure	Side setbacks of primary structure	Rear setbacks of primary structure	1 additional off-street parking space per ADU
Indianapolis, IN	Front yard setbacks per district	Side yard setbacks per district	Rear yard setbacks per district	1 additional off-street parking space per secondary dwelling unit
Milwaukee, WI	Same as principal building	5 feet minimum	4 feet; reduced to 1.5 ft if no alley	No minimum; maximum of 4 spaces per dwelling
Yellow Springs, OH	Same as corresponding residential district	Min. 10 feet between eaves	Same as corresponding residential district	1.5 spaces per dwelling unit
Dayton, OH	Not allowed in front yards	Same as principal building	Min. 5 feet	Parking spaces required behind front setback line
Bowling Green, OH	Same as principal structure setbacks	Same as principal structure setbacks	Detached ADUs must be in rear yard	Off-street parking required per general district rules

The Sprint Team recommends further discussion and consensus building to allow local stakeholders to develop a list of policy recommendations that Franklin County officials can rely upon to create modernized ADU regulations that support housing needs and inclusivity goals.

The following policy areas warrant further consideration and discussion, but have not been viewed or approved by the full sprint team. Participating organizations may offer more customized policy recommendations based on their experiences and expertise.

Setback Considerations

Adopt rules for front yard encroachment on stand-alone ADUs or ADUs that expand upon an existing structure that are as least burdensome as necessary for public health and safety.

Adopt rules for small single-story detached ADUs that do not require additional side and rear setbacks; if abutting an alley, setbacks should be as minimal as necessary for legitimate government functions.

Parking Considerations

Do not impose any additional off-street parking requirements for ADUs.

Do not impose any parking mitigation strategies if the ADU is within a reasonable distance (ex. ½ mile) of a COTA bus stop.

Where parking mitigation strategies are required, permit bike racks and other multimodal transportation options in lieu in addition to other mitigation strategies.

Districts Considerations

ADUs should be allowed by-right in any district that allows a residential use, particularly in locations zoned for single-family use.

ADUs should be allowed regardless of the primary structure’s occupancy and use designation.

Apply similarly flexible policies and zoning rules to duplex housing styles.

Other Policy Considerations

Create pre-approved designs for rapid approval.

Explore and right-size lot coverage ratios.

Exempt or offer incentives for storm-water runoff control measures.

Offer incentives for affordability with monitoring and annual reporting requirements.

Utility Considerations for Carriage House Development

A Simple Department-by-Department Utility Guide for ADU Builders in the City of Columbus

Division of Water

If there are two dwelling units proposed on a property, the property needs to have a single 1-inch diameter water tap, or two (2) $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch water taps (one to each dwelling unit), and would then require two water meters as well. Additional requirements are likely regarding the location of water meters and associated hardware. Additional questions should be directed to Doug Wilson (dhwilson@columbus.gov or 614-645-6304).

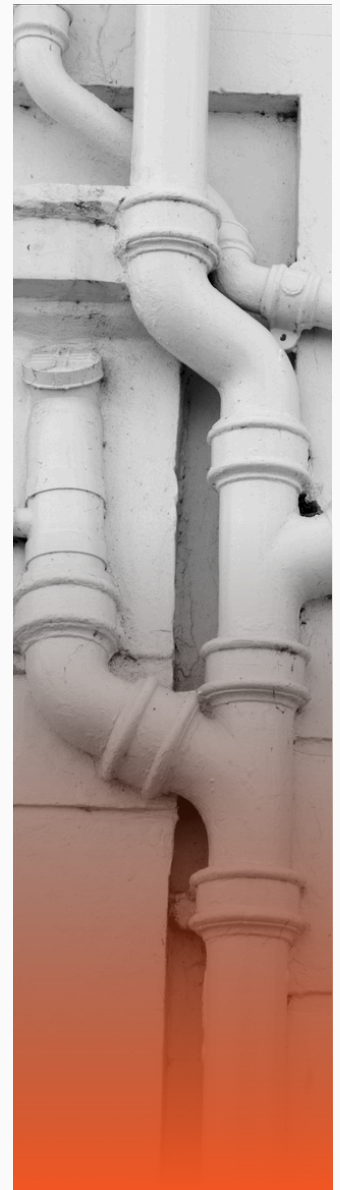
Division of Sewerage and Drainage (DOSD)

(Provided by Division of Surface Water, August 2019) If the proposed carriage house is proposed to be located over the existing (or proposed) sanitary lateral connection to the sewer, the portion of the lateral located beneath the carriage house will have to comply with the Building Code. Questions regarding pipe material for that portion of the sanitary lateral to be located under the building should be directed to Jim Richardson (jarichardson@columbus.gov or 614-645-6340). DOSD will simply look to see that the pipe material is called out on the construction plans.

The second consideration is that according to the OEPA, if two sanitary laterals connect to one another prior to the sanitary main line (i.e. the carriage house sanitary connection ties into the existing sanitary lateral for the primary dwelling), it is considered a "Common Service." A Common Service is required to have a plan prepared by a licensed professional and to have a Permit To Install (PTI) from the OEPA, and must end in a manhole. See attached fact sheet from OEPA that better explains this.

The way to avoid this situation is to have two sanitary taps made for the property, one for the primary residence and one for the carriage house. DOSD prefers this.

One other consideration, if the carriage house is being built with the intent to later split the lot, the applicant should be aware that DOSD does not allow sanitary lateral connections to cross property lines, unless it is going into an easement or a public right of way.



Permit-to-Install Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Projects

Anyone who plans to construct a wastewater collection, conveyance, storage, treatment or disposal facility must apply for and receive a wastewater permit-to-install (PTI) from Ohio EPA before beginning construction.

This includes facilities that handle wastewater from businesses, industries, commercial operations and anything other than one-, two- or three-family dwellings. If multiple homes or buildings connect to a common sewer or disposal system, a PTI is needed for the common sewer or disposal system. This fact sheet is provided to clarify at what point in the sewer system a PTI is needed.

Definitions

From Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 4101:3 - Ohio Plumbing Code

- Building - Any structure consisting of foundations, walls, columns, girders, beams, floors and roof or combination of any number of these parts, with or without other parts or appurtenances.
- Building Drain - That part of the lowest piping of a drainage system that receives the discharge from soil, waste and other drainage pipes inside and that extends 30 inches (762 mm) beyond the walls of the building and conveys the drainage to the building sewer.
- Building Sewer - That part of the drainage system that extends from the end of the building drain and conveys the discharge to a public sewer, private sewer, individual sewage disposal system or other point of disposal.

From Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 6111.01

- Disposal System - A system for disposing of sewage, industrial waste or other liquid wastes, and includes sewerage systems and treatment works.
- Sewerage System - Pipelines for conduits, pumping stations and force mains and all other constructions, devices, appurtenances and facilities for collecting or conducting waterborne sewage, industrial waste or other wastes to a point of disposal or treatment but does not include building drains and subdrains, building sewers and building storm sewers.

Permit Regulations

From Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3745-42-02. Permit to install and plan approvals for disposal systems - Except as provided in paragraphs (B) to (D)(3) of this rule, no person shall cause, permit or allow the installation of a new disposal system or cause, permit or allow the modification of a disposal system without first obtaining an individual PTI, a general PTI or plan approval from the director.

With regard to disposal systems, applications for a PTI shall include plans for the disposal system and issuance of a PTI shall constitute approval of plans for the disposal of waste and for the disposal system pursuant to sections 6111.44 and 6111.45 of the ORC.

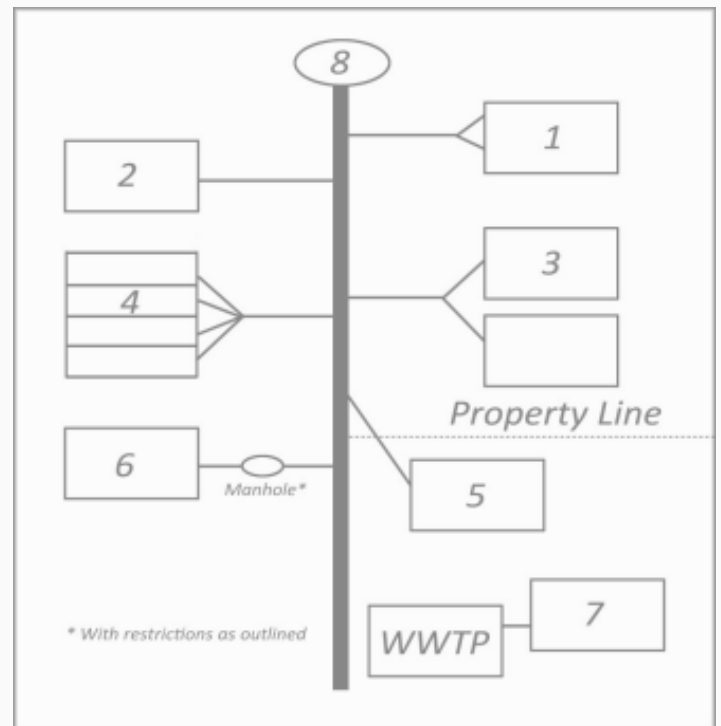
Where can I get more information?

If you have questions or need more information, contact Ohio EPA's Division of Surface Water at your local district office. For district office boundaries and contact information, see epa.ohio.gov/Districts.aspx.

Permit-to-Install Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Projects

Permitting Scenarios

1. Two or more building sewers combine outside of the building. This scenario would not require a PTI as long as only conveyance systems (gravity pipe) are used to transport the wastewater to the public sewer.
2. A single building sewer connects to the public sewer. This scenario would not require a PTI as long as only conveyance systems are used to transport the wastewater to the public sewer.
3. Single sewers from two different buildings connect before flowing to the public sewer. This scenario would require a PTI from the point the pipes connect until they reach the public sewer.
4. A single building is split into separate sections' drains outside the building. This scenario would require a PTI from the point where the building drains connect to each other and on down to the public sewer.
5. The building sewer crosses property lines before connecting to the public sewer. This scenario would not require a PTI as long as only conveyance systems are used.
6. The building sewer enters a manhole prior to draining to the public sewer. This scenario would not require a PTI as long as the manhole:
 - a. Is located on a sewer lateral and upstream of any collector sewer;
 - b. Includes not more than one influent pipe; and
 - c. Does not house any equipment such as a pump.
7. The building sewer connects directly to the wastewater treatment plant. This scenario would require a PTI for the building sewer.
8. The common or collector sewer requires a PTI no matter who will own it (private or public).



Sprint Team: Finance & Funding

Goals & Priorities

The Finance Sprint Team's goal was to explore ways to make ADUs financially accessible to the public. Its primary objective was to conduct two expert roundtables with potential lenders and builders to understand barriers to greater finance access. Those focus groups were completed in May 2025, those results and learnings are provided below.



Builder Roundtable

Results & Recommendations

There is limited local experience with ADU construction but growing interest.

Utility issues, especially water and sewer capacity, are likely barriers when adding an ADU to an existing single family home. Sub-metering issues may be impacted.

Zoning challenges will be similar to those encountered during a duplex build, meaning that the complexity and cost to navigate are likely beyond a typical homeowner's capability ("this is not a DIY project")

Typical zoning barriers may be parking and side yards or setback requirements.

Estimated costs are between \$140k-220k. Key cost factors is site readiness, government fees, building regulation (ex. historical requirements or energy efficiencies), whether modular/manufactured units are allowed, and whether ADA or AWARE standards are triggered.

Some felt that ADUs may remain a relatively niche construction type with typical builders more likely to advance duplex or triplex construction instead. Because these are likely to be used by smaller contractors instead of developers, familiarity with traditional financing incentives (like Community Reinvestment Area) may be limited.

Lender Roundtable

Results & Recommendations

Lenders support affordability and, while ADU-specific products are limited, they are willing to consider new financing tools that meet local needs if paired with the right risk controls.

ADUs may be allowable under existing refinance or rehab programs, with limitations.

Public-private partnership have appeal, but lenders need to be cautious of lien restrictions or covenants that may impact their lien position or salability.

Underwriting may need to consider loan-to-value, loan-to-cost, and debt-coverage-ratio.

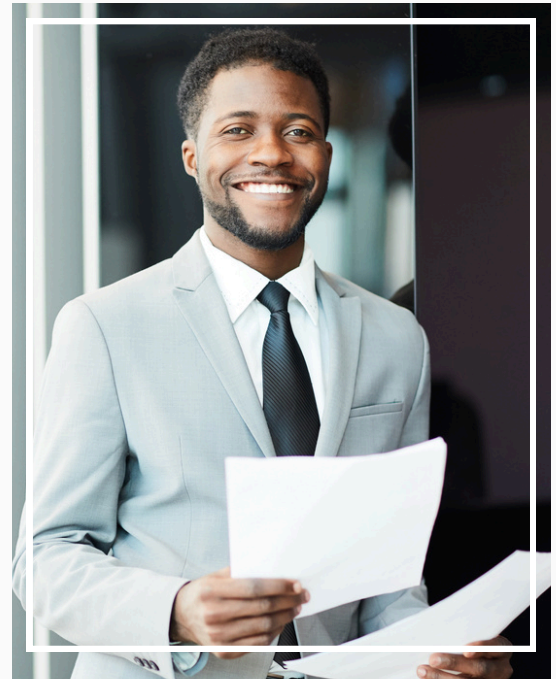
Having sufficient as-complete appraisal comparables may be a “start up” challenge.

Borrower cashflow loans are more challenging and may require prior rental history, a discount of anticipated rents, additional borrower income sources, and/or a signed lease.

Funding products for builders will be a different suite with varying levels of interest.

Central Ohio Community Improvement Corp. and the Affordable Housing Trust of Columbus & Franklin County may be future partners to support ADU lending and construction.

Local regulation, including around short-term rental laws, will be important considerations.



Innovation

Zoning and permitting processes need significant streamlining for ADUs to be accessible to homeowners.

Private businesses can bridge the capacity barrier by offering ‘off the shelf’ ADU services.

Partnership

Lending based on future rent estimates is challenging; a nonprofit organization with a higher risk profile and fewer regulations may be well-positioned to pilot new lending programs.

Dialogue

Sprint team recommends additional focus groups with appraisal stakeholders and leadership at the Affordable Housing Trust to further refine and advance financing objectives.

Sprint Team: Design

07

Goal: Address practical ADU development needs.

The design team identified two priority projects for the sprint: creating a getting started guide for homeowners and other ADU stakeholders and a photo walk-through with specification details that can aid ADU architecture and development partners.



The results of these projects are on the following pages of this report.



ADUs Step-by-Step

A Quick-Start Guide for Homeowners Building an ADU in the City of Columbus



Accessory Dwelling Unit Cost Estimates 2025

(adding an all-electric accessory dwelling unit to a pre-existing single-family home)

Element	Estimated Cost
Survey	\$1,200
Architectural Drawings	\$4,000
Plot Plan	\$300
Certified Address	\$150
Zoning Review	\$200
Variance	\$350
Construction (based on 1 bed/1 bath, 552 sq. ft)	\$168,500
Other (insurance, upgraded materials, landscaping, professional services, construction loan interest)	TBD by Owner
	\$174,700

Survey

Order a formal survey from a surveyor. Estimated cost: \$1,200.

Architectural Drawings/Site Plan

Hire an architect to create ADU drawings and preliminary site plan using survey. (\$4,000)

Plot Plan

Order a plot plan from surveyor utilizing the architectural drawings and site plan. (\$300)

Certified Address

Obtain an address for the ADU from the City of Columbus. (\$150)

Zoning Review

Submit a zoning review application to the City of Columbus, to ascertain what variances will be required to build ADU (\$200). Some owners may have their architect lead the zoning/variance process or hire an attorney; *these professional fees can vary and are not included in this section.*

Variance Application

Using the zoning review information, apply for a Council Variance to build an ADU. (\$350)

Area Commission Presentation

Present variance to local area commission for approval. This is generally a two-step process with presenting at a zoning committee first, before presenting the project to the larger commission. Reach out to your commission's zoning chair for more details.

City Council Presentation

Present variance to City Council.

Construction Assumptions

The following cost assumptions were used in the above budget estimate to arrive at a total construction budget of \$168,500 for a 552 sqft one-bedroom, one-bath ADU with rental-grade finishes:

Concrete

- No city walk repair
- No curb replacement
- 15' "front walk" and "back" walk included just as a base



Site conditions

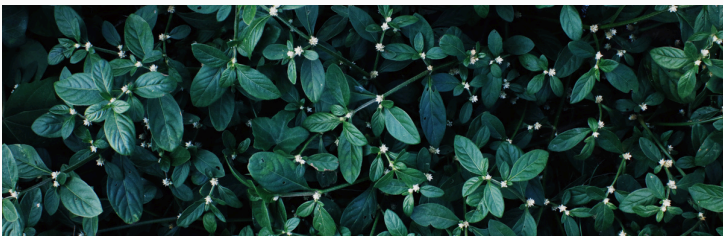
- No landscaping budgeted
- No fence between the house and ADU budgeted
- Assumed alley in the back where sewer is located
- Assumed using the power at the main house so there is no temporary electric in budget

Water

- Water service line conversion
- Homeowner can choose to use the existing water meter that is in the main house. If using the existing water meter, there will only be one water bill for both units (unless you choose to do a submeter).
- If two water meters and two water bills are desired that would require a new tap fee with capacity. (This is included in the above construction number)

Sewer

- Sewer camera included
- Assumed - 50' of new sewer ... depending on the site conditions. There needs to be NEW schedule 40 (a certain type of slightly more expensive pipe) installed underneath the ADU.
- Two sewer cleanouts are budgeted.
- There should be no capacity fees due



ADUs Photo Walk-Through

The Huron Studio: Design Forward, Yet Affordable

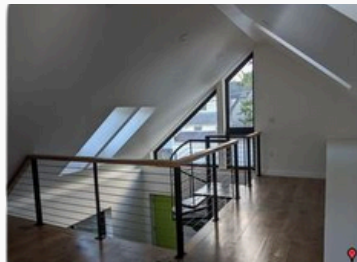
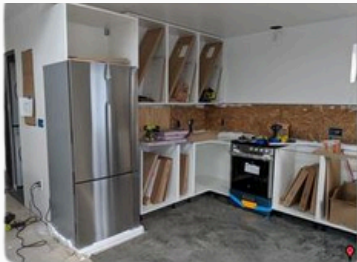
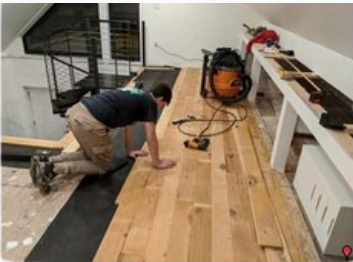
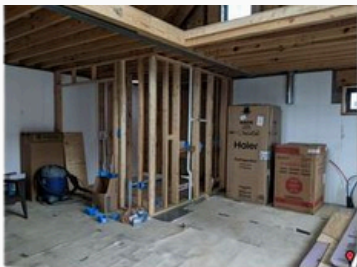
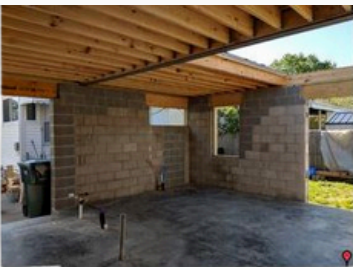
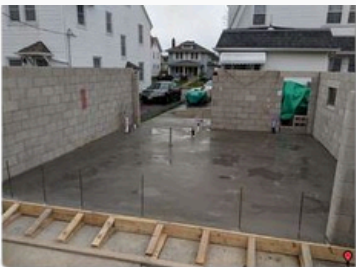
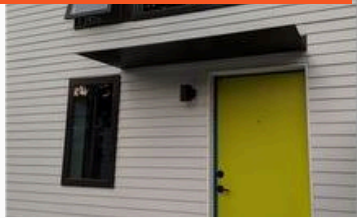
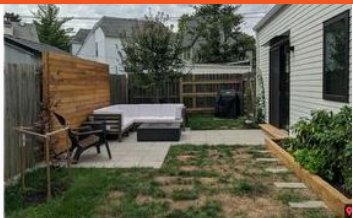


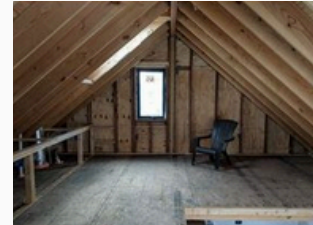
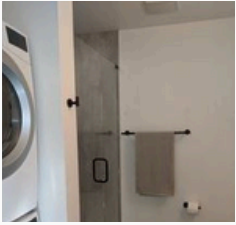
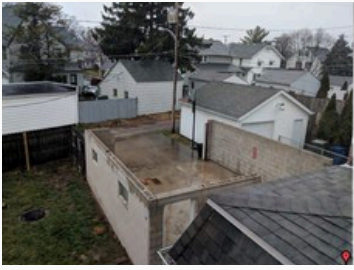
"Before" Site Photo



"Before" Site Photo

Construction Photos





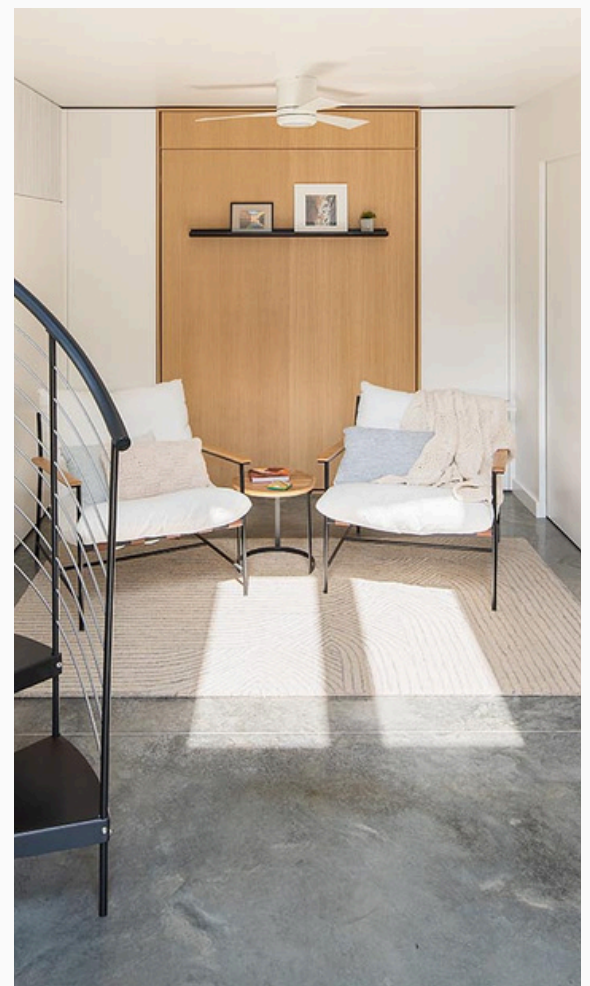
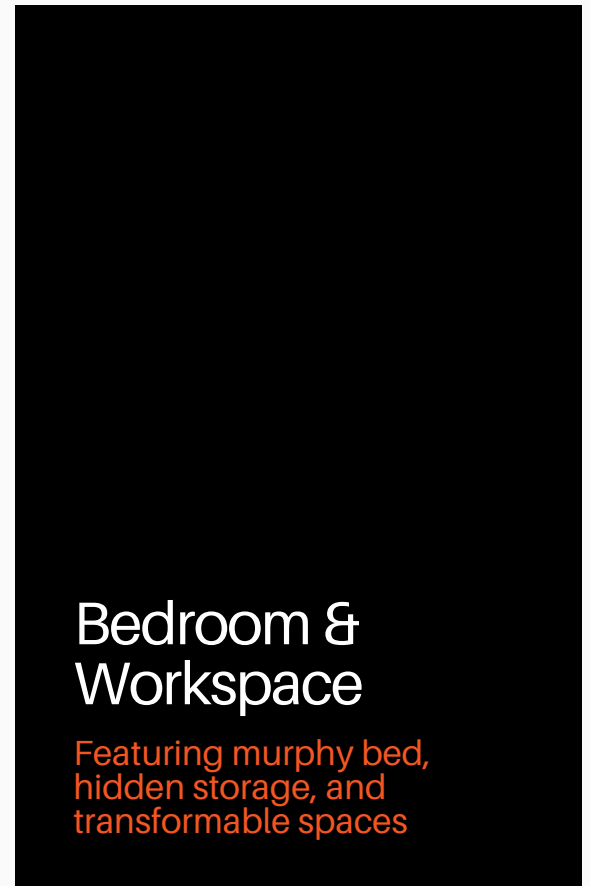
The Huron Studio is a modern 575 sf live/work studio in Columbus, Ohio. Transformed from a 2-car garage, the accessory dwelling unit is a light-filled space with streamlined simplicity, subtle refinement, and a natural and welcoming material palette. It features a full kitchen and bath, a living area with a Murphy bed, loft space for working and lounging, and a shared patio for outdoor enjoyment.

The project was self-built by the design team who built nearly everything themselves, salvaging what they could from the existing structure, creatively sourcing materials, and choosing budget-friendly products where possible to stay within their limited budget (under \$80,000).



Completed



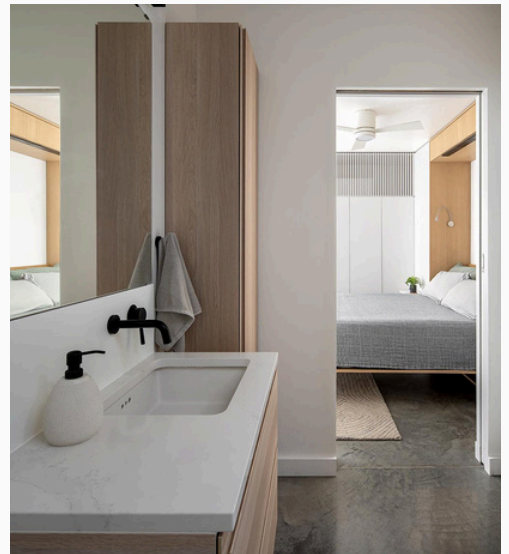
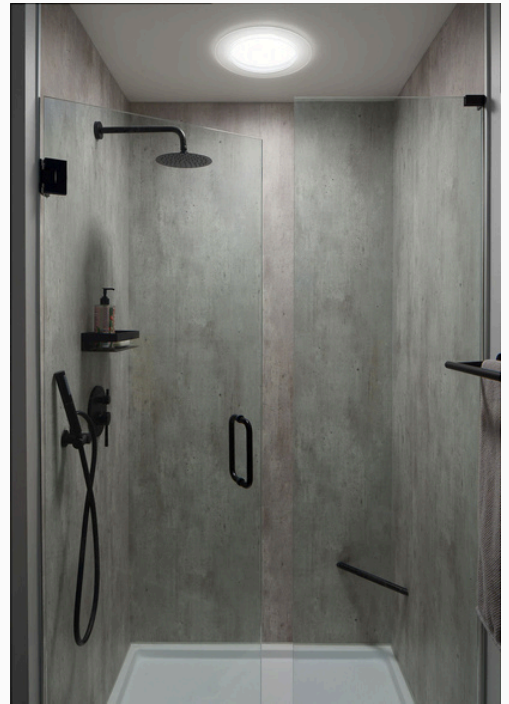




Kitchen & Dining Area

Featuring luxury finishes
and sleek, modern
design aesthetics

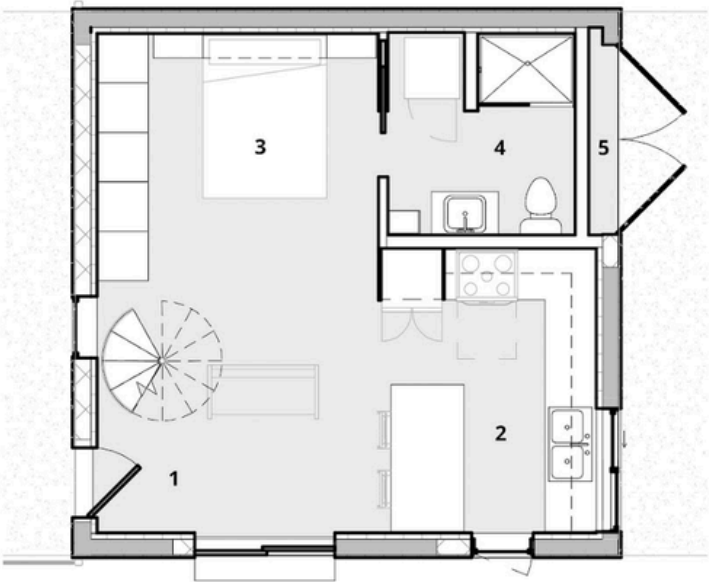




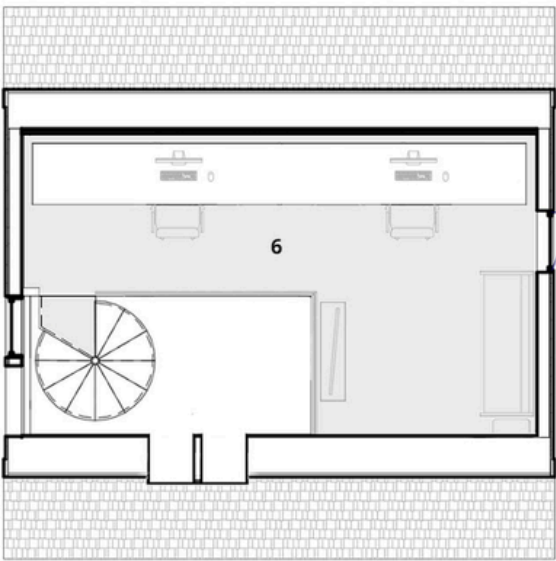
Living Area & Bathroom

Space-saving design and ample natural light are highlighted.

Architectural Drawings

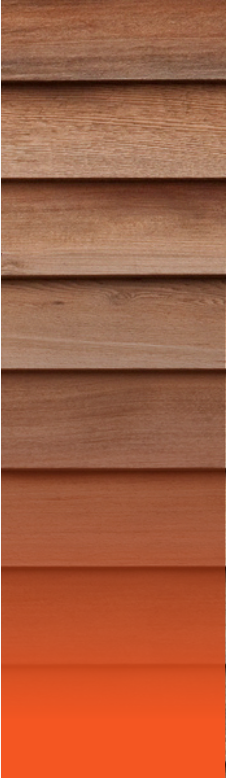
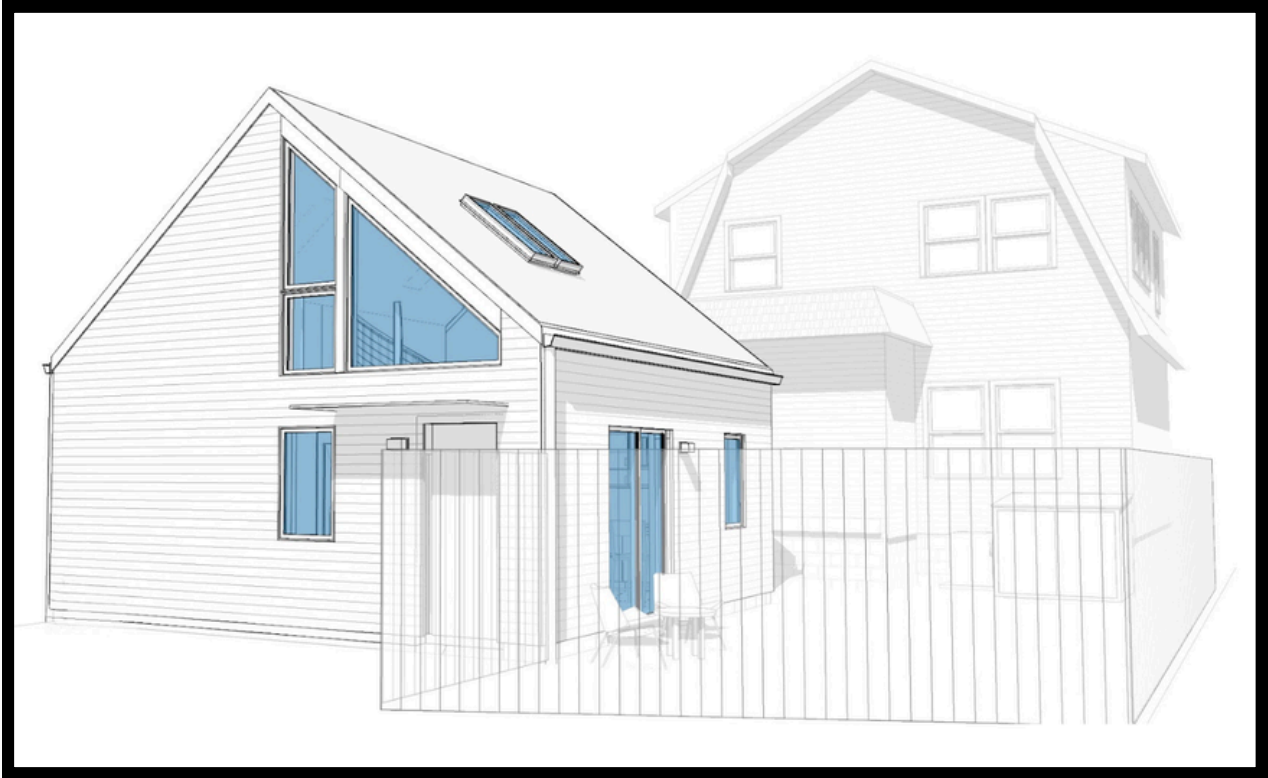


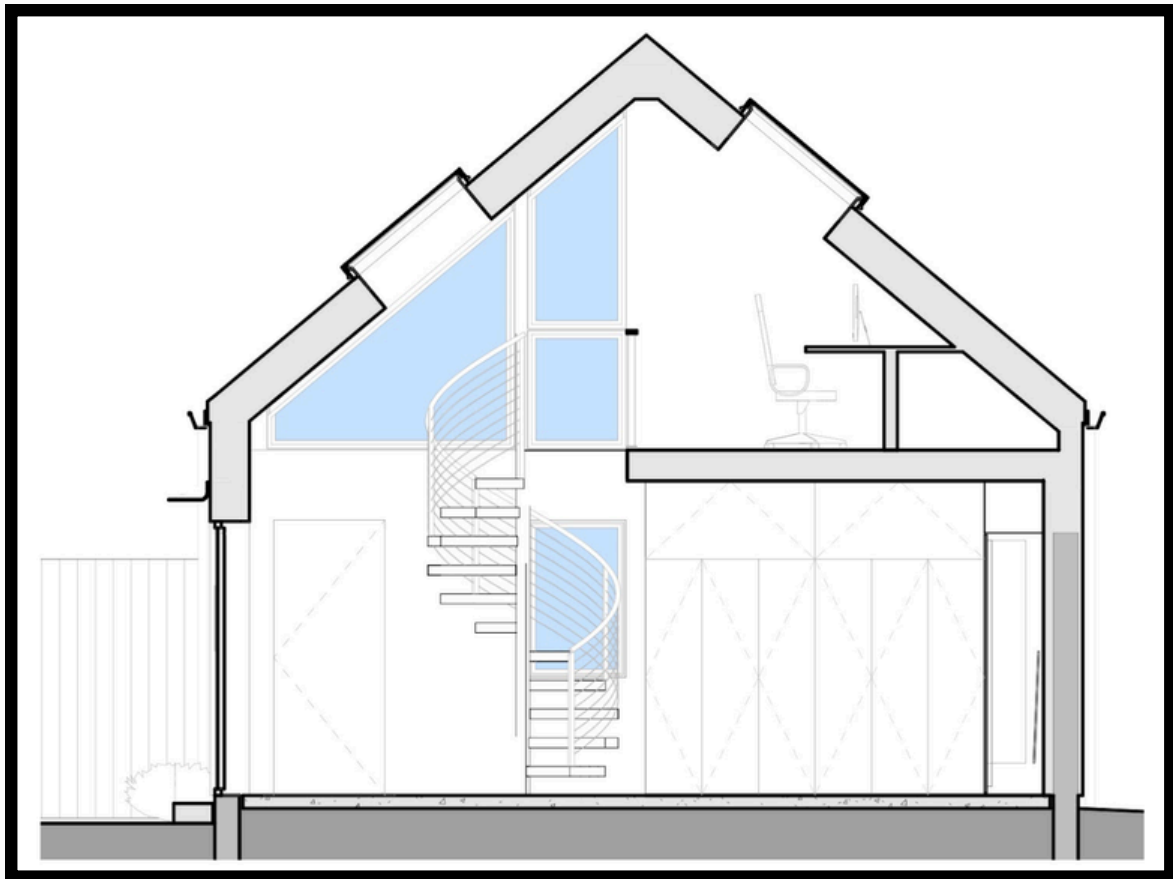
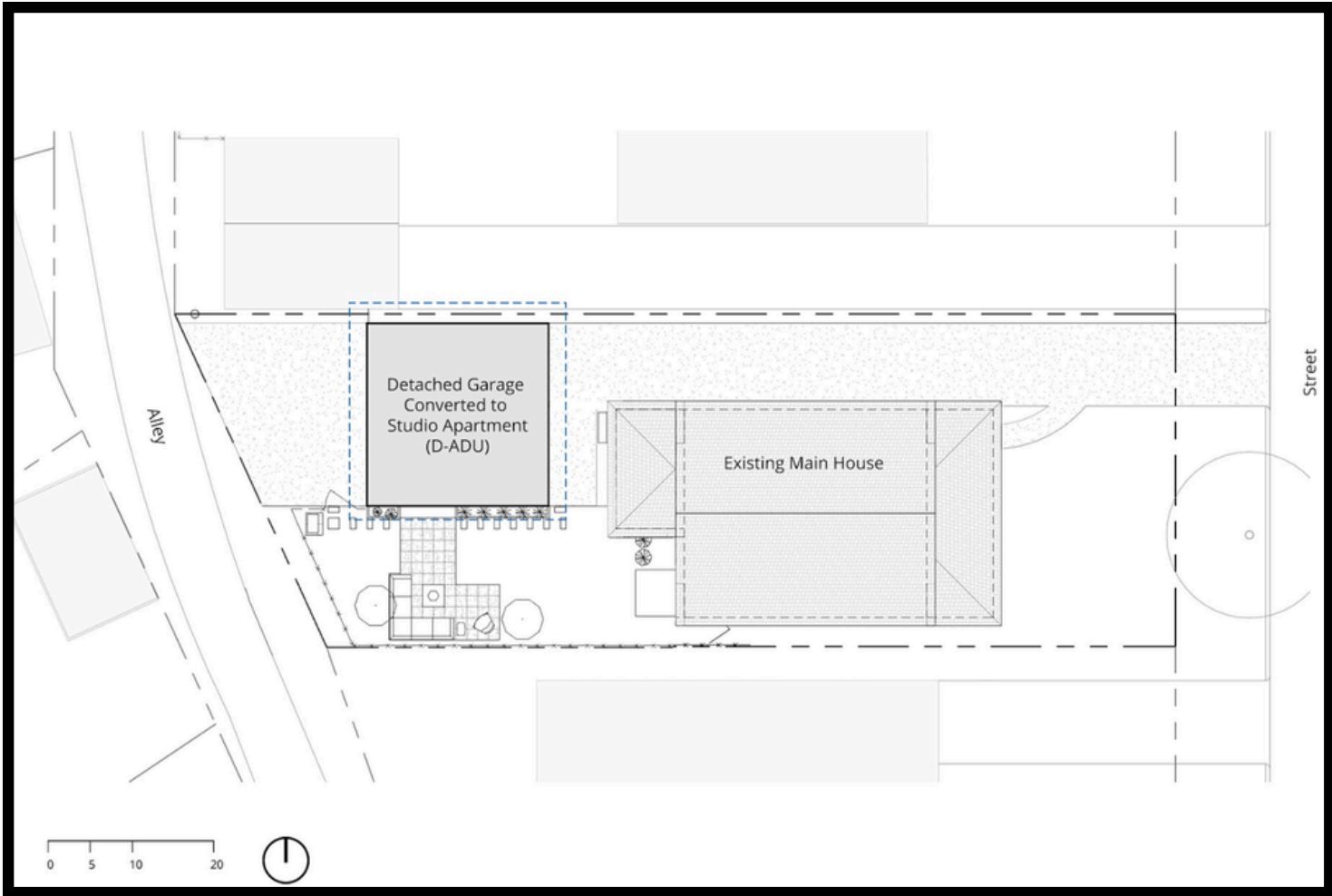
First Floor Plan



Loft Floor Plan

- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Sleeping
- 4 Bath
- 5 Outdoor storage
- 6 Loft





Next Steps

08

Advocacy

Sprint team members plan to advocate for policies and programs that can support broader and simpler ADU adoption. At the organizational level, both the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio and the RISE Together Innovation Institute have strategic plans to support zoning modernization, process reform, financing support, and other programmatic initiatives that can broaden adoption.

AHACO



RISE TOGETHER



Technical Assistance

Sprint team members intend to further develop the body of evidence and nurture the supportive ecosystem needed to expand equitable access to ADUs. At the organizational level, CONVERGENCE Columbus' Housing Supply Workstream has already adopted a strategic plan to support this need.

CONVERGENCE COLUMBUS



Innovation & Leadership

Sprint team members will use their individual skills and time to support ADU activities as they are best able. Policymakers will strive to adopt reforms, funders will work to create structured programs and reduce barriers, realtors and real estate professionals will use their expertise to engage the public, and nonprofit organizations will work to educate the support the community.

ALL OF US TOGETHER



The image shows a modern interior space with a warm, orange-toned overlay. In the foreground, a large, rustic wooden dining table is set with a bowl of oranges. Behind it, a black leather sofa is visible. The ceiling is made of light-colored wood planks with dark wooden beams. Two large, clear glass pendant lights hang from the ceiling. In the background, there is a black shelving unit with glass doors and a television mounted on the wall.

Contact Us

Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio
www.ahaco.org

CONVERGENCE Columbus
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RISE Together Innovation Institute
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