

MEMO

Date: August 12, 2026

To: Community and Economic Development Committee (CEDC)

From: C. Shannon McGuire, Assistant Director of Plan Services
Adair Bright, AICP, Senior Planner

Re: Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Continued Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends moving forward with a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) amendment to remove the lot size requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) citywide. Based on staff research, current lot size standards are more restrictive than those of most comparable communities and have been identified as the primary regulatory barrier to ADU development.

BACKGROUND

At the July 8, 2026, CEDC meeting, staff provided an overview of the City's ADU regulations and implementation experience since their adoption in 2023. Staff reported that ADU activity has remained limited, with only a small number of projects advancing through the development process.

Based on permit activity, homeowner inquiries, and staff observations, staff identified several factors that appear to be limiting ADU development. The most cited barrier was the current lot size requirements, both within and outside Downtown Lee's Summit (DTLS). Staff also noted that homeowners' association (HOA) restrictions, construction costs, financing challenges, and other development standards may be discouraging ADU construction.

Following the presentation, the Committee directed staff to research how Lee's Summit's minimum lot size requirements compare with those of surrounding communities and to prepare a draft ordinance removing the minimum lot size requirement citywide. The Committee also directed staff to provide additional information regarding a potential public communication and outreach plan for ADUs, as well as the feasibility of pre-approved ADU building plans to help streamline the permitting process.

PEER COMMUNITY REVIEW

Attached to this memorandum is a summary of ADU regulations for comparable communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. Staff's review found that Lee's Summit's current minimum lot size requirements are generally more restrictive than those of neighboring jurisdictions. Most communities reviewed do not impose a minimum lot size requirement for ADUs. A few exceptions were identified, primarily in more rural jurisdictions. For example, Peculiar requires a minimum lot size of 8,400 square feet, while Lansing requires a minimum lot size of two acres. Similar acreage-based requirements were also identified in Johnson County, Kansas; Miami County, Kansas; and Douglas County, Kansas.

PRE-APPROVED BUILDING PLAN RESEARCH

Staff also researched the use of pre-approved building plans as a potential tool to streamline the ADU permitting process. Locally, staff identified two communities utilizing this approach: Kansas City, Missouri, and Overland Park, Kansas. Both programs are relatively new and have not yet demonstrated significant utilization.

Kansas City's pre-approved plan program has been available for approximately three months. Of the 7 plans offered, only one has an ADU component (ADU over detached garage). No permits have been issued using any pre-approved plan to date. Kansas City staff indicated that requiring a licensed residential contractor to submit the permit application may limit participation and believe additional time is needed to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Overland Park launched its "Portfolio Homes" program in November 2025. Of the 20 plans offered, no ADU option is provided. No permits have been issued using any pre-approved plan to date. To encourage participation, the City waives building permit fees when an approved portfolio plan is used. In April 2026, Overland Park also amended its development regulations through the Portfolio Homes Pilot Program, allowing the Planning Commission to modify certain dimensional standards that may otherwise create barriers to development.

At this time, staff recommends a watch-and-wait approach. A pre-approved ADU plan program has the potential to reduce design costs for homeowners and encourage ADU construction. However, before pursuing such a program, staff recommends allowing additional time to evaluate the effectiveness of similar programs in neighbor communities and to assess the impact of the proposed UDO amendment on ADU construction activity in Lee's Summit. The results of both efforts can then be used to determine whether a pre-approved ADU plan program is warranted and would provide meaningful benefits to homeowners and the community.

NEXT STEPS

At the recommendation of the CEDC, staff will proceed with a UDO amendment to remove the lot size requirement for ADUs citywide. Following the Committee's recommendation, the proposed amendment would proceed through the standard UDO amendment

process, including public hearings before the Planning Commission and final consideration by the City Council.

If the proposed amendment is ultimately adopted, staff will work with the City's Communications and Public Information (CPI) team to develop and implement a public outreach and education strategy. The communication plan will inform residents, property owners, developers, and homeowners' associations of the updated regulations, explain the ADU approval process, and provide updated educational materials to improve awareness of ADU development opportunities within Lee's Summit.