

# Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) Best Practices Guide for Idaho

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR CITIES,  
POLICYMAKERS, AND HOMEOWNERS

Home prices and rents have outpaced wages across the state.

Most neighborhoods only allow one home per lot, even near jobs, schools, and services. Families, workers, and seniors are left with fewer options and longer commutes.

## Section 1: Policy Best Practices

### 1. Legalize ADUs by Right

- Allow one ADU on every residential lot.
- Keep rules simple: no special hearings, no discretionary reviews.

### 2. Right-Sized Requirements

- Limit owner-occupancy requirements (which discourage investment).
- Allow ADUs up to 800–1,000 square feet.
- Reduce parking mandates, especially near jobs, transit, or schools.

### 3. Fair Fees

- Scale impact and utility fees to ADU size. A 600 sq. ft. ADU should not pay the same as a 2,500 sq. ft. house.

### 4. Clear Design Standards

- Use objective, simple rules for compatibility: height, setbacks, and lot coverage.
- Provide “pattern zoning” or pre-approved designs to save time and money.

## Section 2: Public Information Best Practices

### 1. Citywide ADU Resource Page

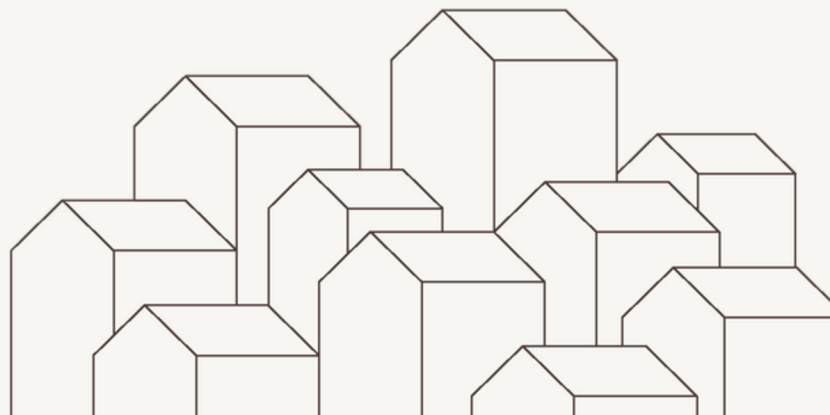
- Step-by-step guides for homeowners
- FAQs about cost, design, and renting
- Clear fee schedules and timelines

### 2. Outreach Campaigns

- Tell stories of Idaho families who benefit from ADUs (multigenerational living, mortgage support, rental flexibility).
- Host public forums, lunch-and-learns, and demonstration tours of completed ADUs.

### 3. Multilingual Access

- Provide ADU information in Spanish and other languages widely spoken in Idaho communities.



## Section 3: Process Best Practices

### 1. Fast-Track Permitting

- Create a dedicated ADU permit track with a 60–90 day shot clock.
- Train permitting staff to handle ADUs efficiently.

### 2. Pre-Approved Designs

- Offer free or low-cost pre-approved plans for common lot sizes.
- Encourage local architects to contribute adaptable designs.

### 3. Financing Support

- Partner with local credit unions and banks to expand ADU loan products.
- Advocate for a state-backed revolving loan fund.

### 4. Builder & Contractor Network

- Maintain a directory of local contractors experienced in ADU construction.
- Encourage small builders to specialize in ADUs.

## Section 4: Case Studies

### Portland, OR:

Removed owner-occupancy and parking mandates, paired with outreach campaign. ADU permits skyrocketed.

### California:

Statewide legalization paired with fee reform led to more than 30,000 ADUs permitted in 2022.

### Boise, ID (pilot projects):

Cottage courts and ADUs are being tested in certain neighborhoods, offering lessons for statewide policy.



## Section 5: Recommendations for Idaho

### 1. Cities and Counties:

Update zoning codes to reflect best practices, adopt pre-approved designs, and provide multilingual outreach.

### 2. Builders and Developers:

Form ADU networks, partner with homeowners, and share lessons learned.

### 3. Homeowners:

Explore financing tools, talk with local contractors, and join Gem State Housing Alliance to advocate for reform.

Download this guide and more  
resources at: [gemstatehousing.org](https://gemstatehousing.org)