



CITY OF  
**TUCSON**

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

March 2023

# ADUs *Accessory Dwelling Units* in Tucson

1 Year Review

# Agenda

March 7, 2023

1. Overview
2. ADU Application Data
3. Policy & Program Updates
4. Additional Outreach
5. Recommendations



# Overview

Since January 7, 2022

Tucson has permitted ADUs, or Accessory Dwelling Units in zones that allow residential uses.

- 1 ADU can be built on any residential lot (any lot with 1 or 2 homes)
- An ADU can be up to 10% of the lot size, or 1,000 sq ft max  
*All lots are allowed an ADU of at least 650 sq ft*
- An ADU can be up to 12 ft high, or up to height of the primary structure
- All other dimensional standards regarding lot coverage & setbacks apply
- An ADU requires 1 parking space  
*Can be waived for sites that are a 1/4-mile from transit or a bike boulevard; on-street parking can also be used*
- A newly constructed ADU requires a cool roof



# 1 Year Review

## Additional direction from Mayor and Council

### 1 Year Review of program

- Analyze equitable access to benefits of ADUs
- Consider community-friendly processes for flexible ADU sizes beyond a cautious first ordinance

### 5 Year Review for Potential Sunset

- The amendments to the UDC... shall expire and cease to be effective on October 19, 2026 unless extended by the Mayor and Council...
- The purpose of this sunset clause is to provide... the opportunity to determine whether to continue to implement the amended provisions or to revert to those provisions existing prior to the adoption of this Ordinance.

# ADU Permit Applications

January – December 2022

**35** Under Review

**24** Approved or Issued

**0** Constructed

*2 applications changed scope to sleeping quarters during the process*

**61** total applications submitted

- *Permit applications currently under review are subject to dimensional standards in UDC Section 6 and may be returned for corrections / project adjustments before potentially reaching approval*
- *Data examples in this presentation likely to be returned for corrections are marked with an \**

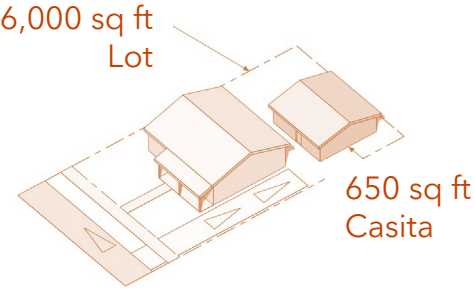
**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022

# ADU Sizes

## Lot Area 6,499 sq ft or less

- 5 applications: 570
- 600
- 628
- 675 \*
- 730 \*

Maximum ADU size based on lot size examples



## Lot Area 6,500 sq ft or more

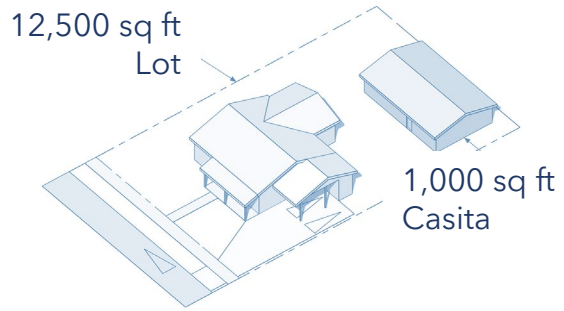
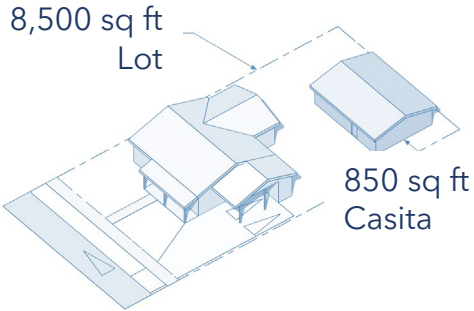
Range: 318 sq ft - 1,155 sq ft \*

Average 718 sq ft

Most Common 780 sq ft

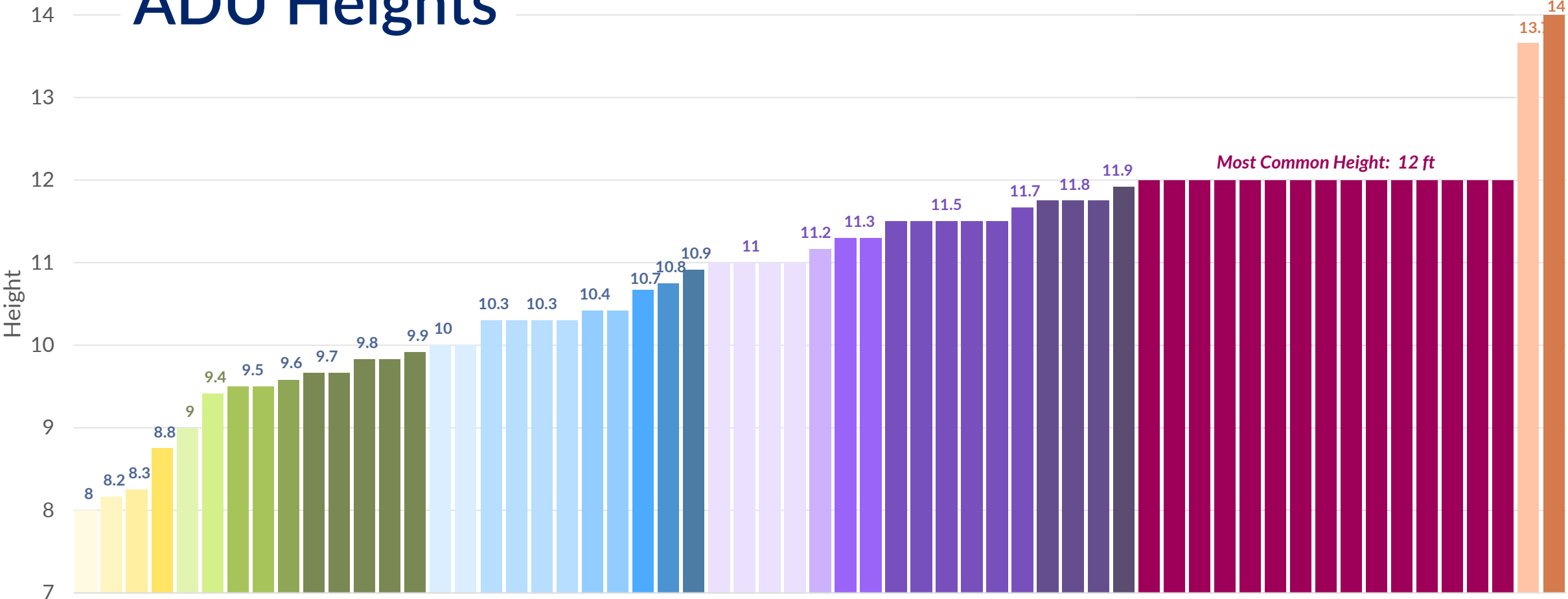
Percentage of Lot: >0% - 11% \*

Most Common 10%



**61** total applications submitted  
January – December 2022

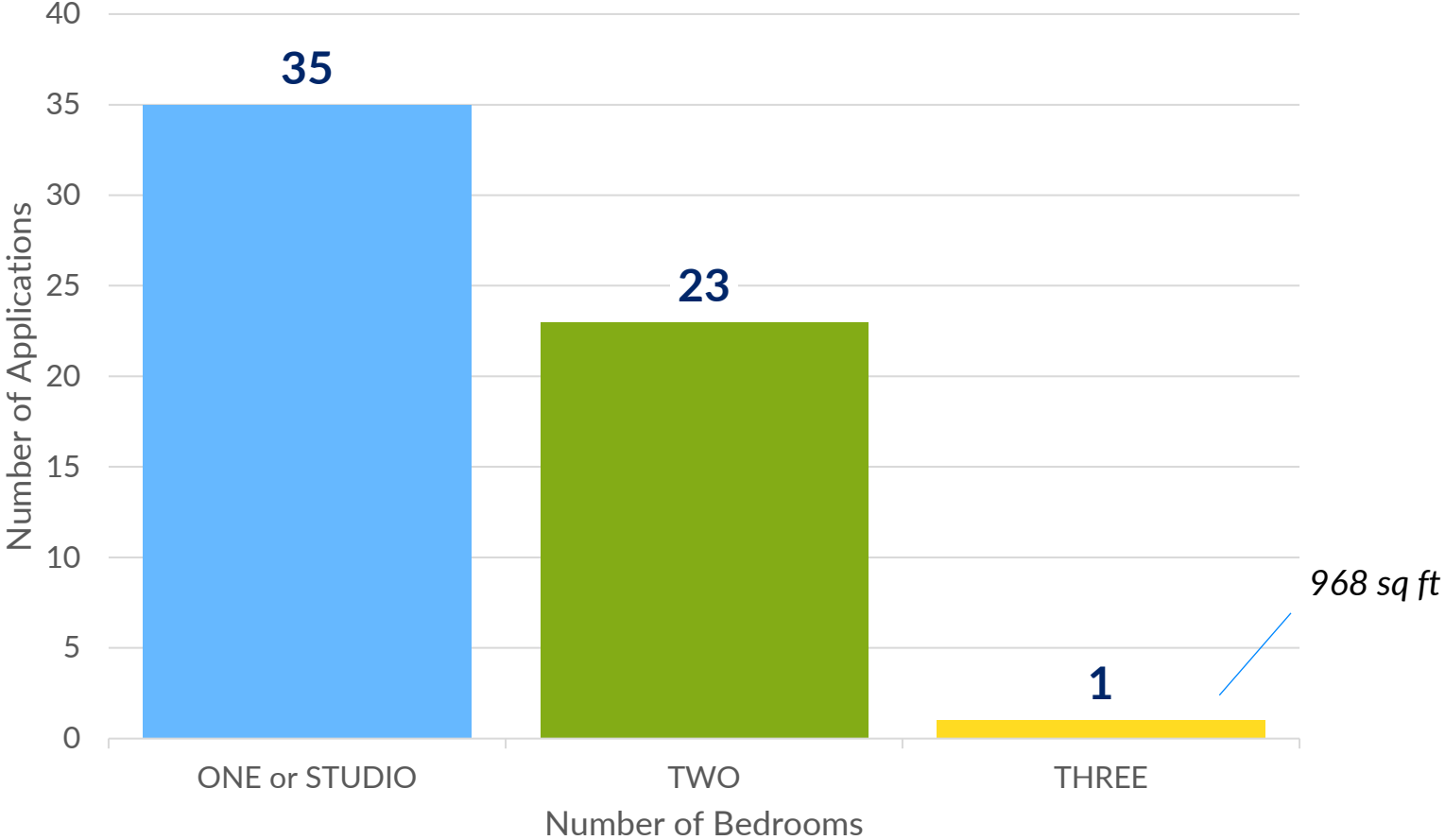
# ADU Heights



Height Range: 8 ft – 14 ft

**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022

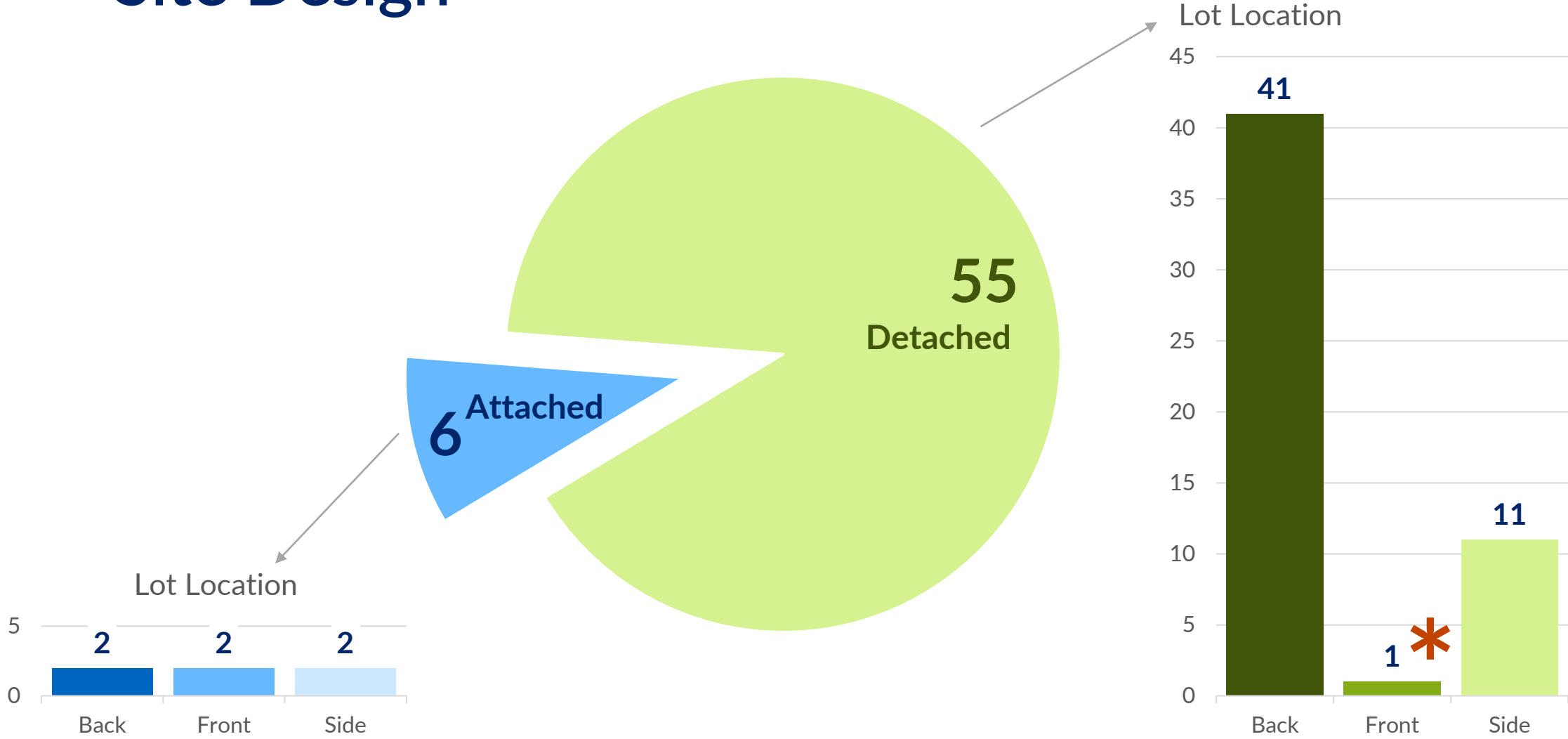
# Number of Bedrooms





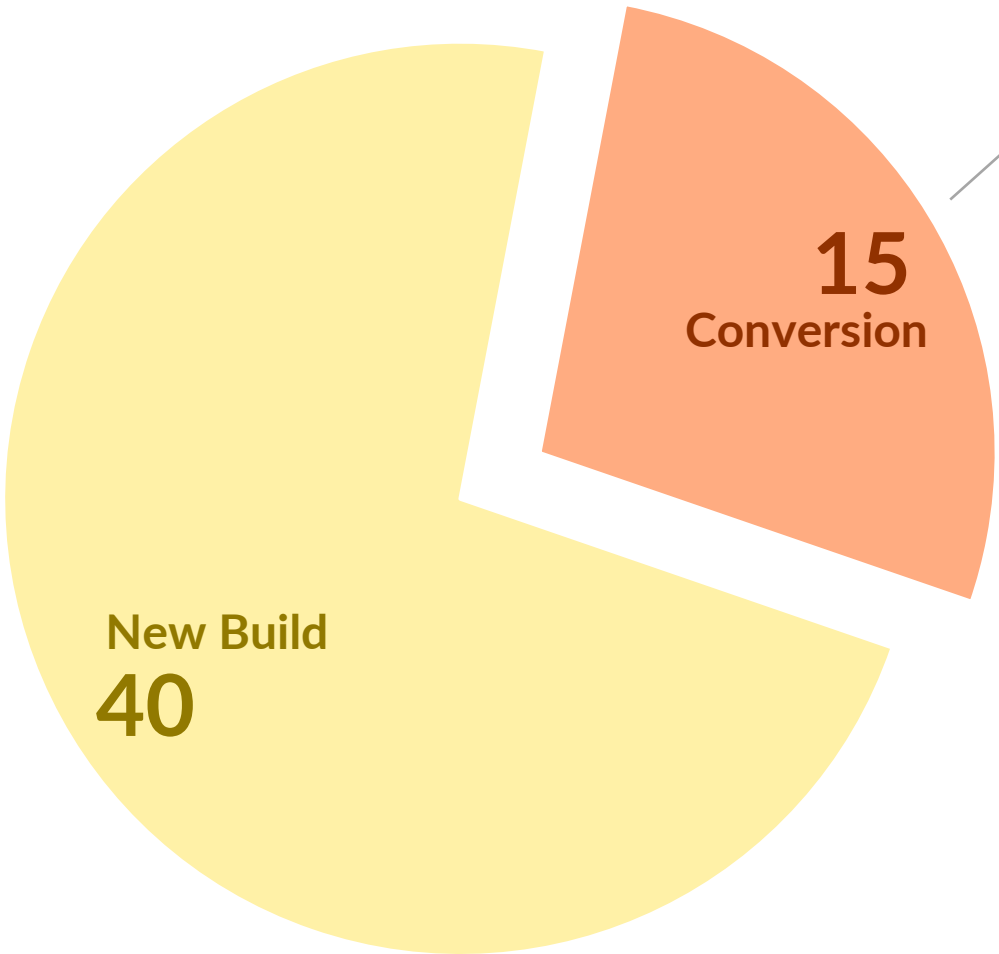
**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022

# Site Design

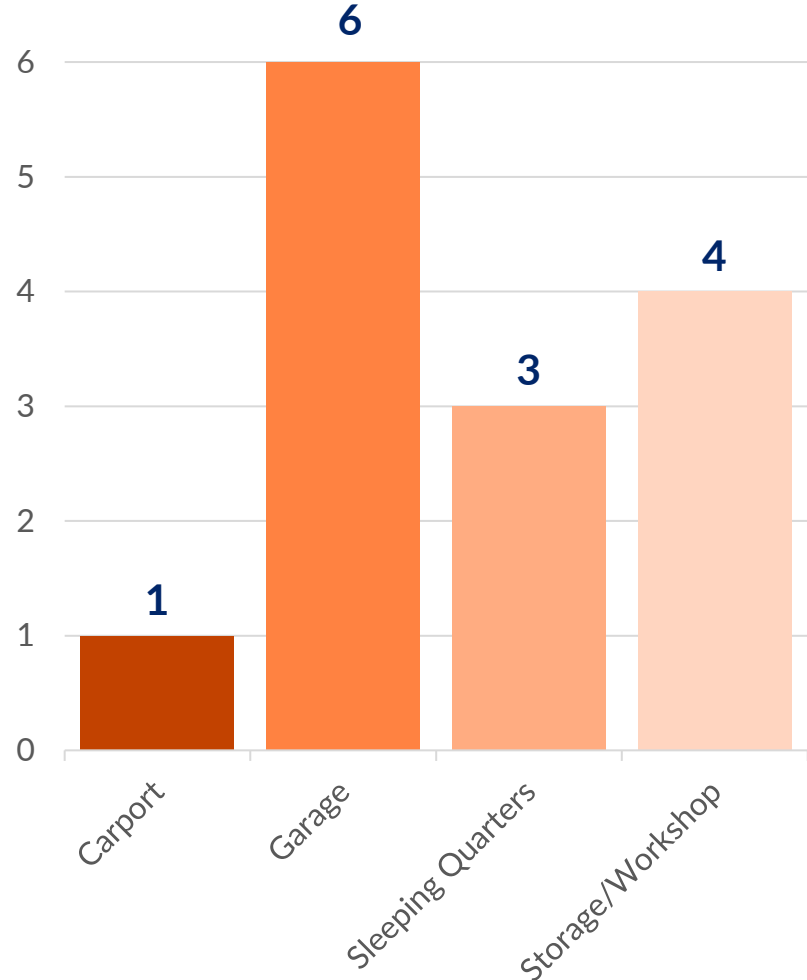


**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022

# Type of Build

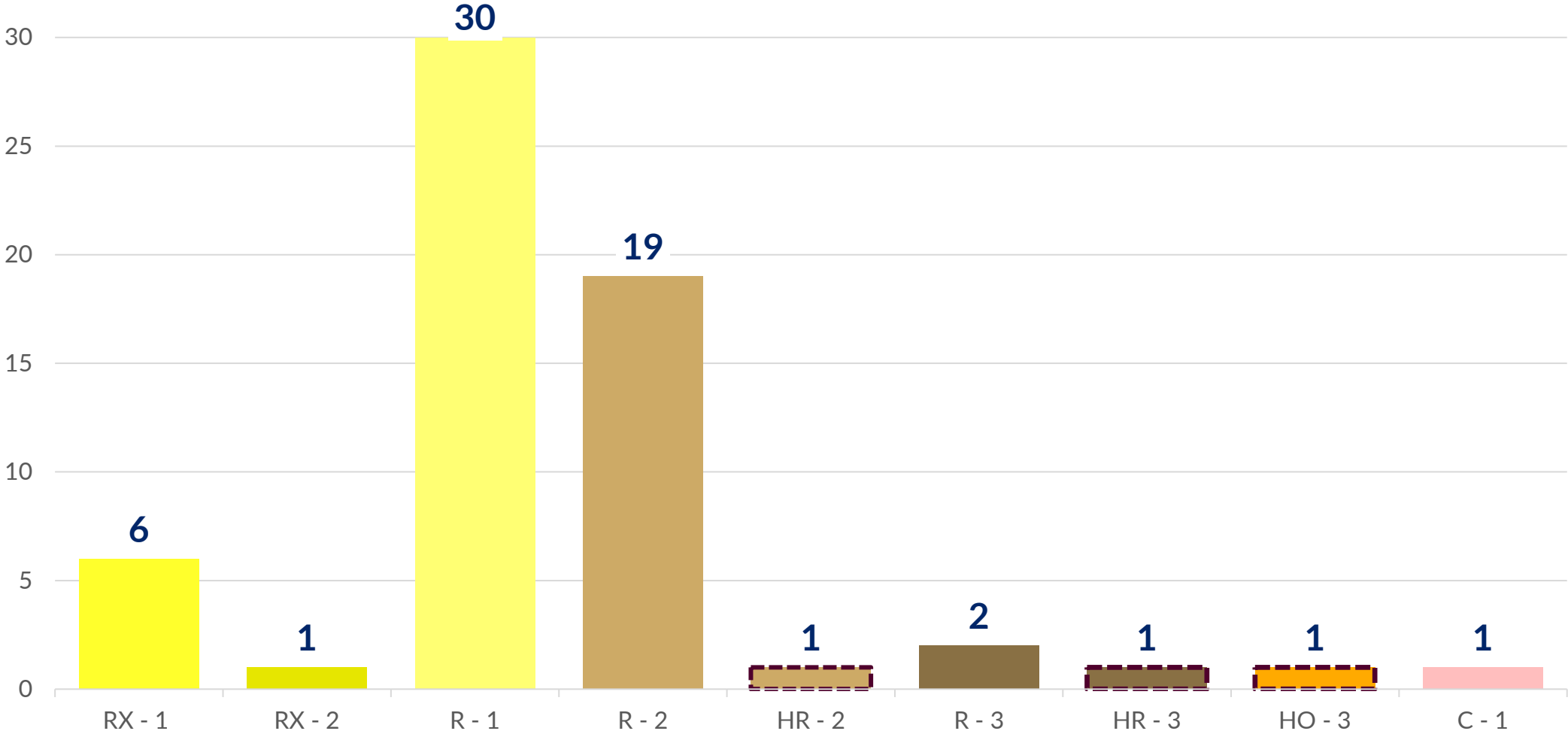


## Type of Conversion



**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022

# Location *Zones*

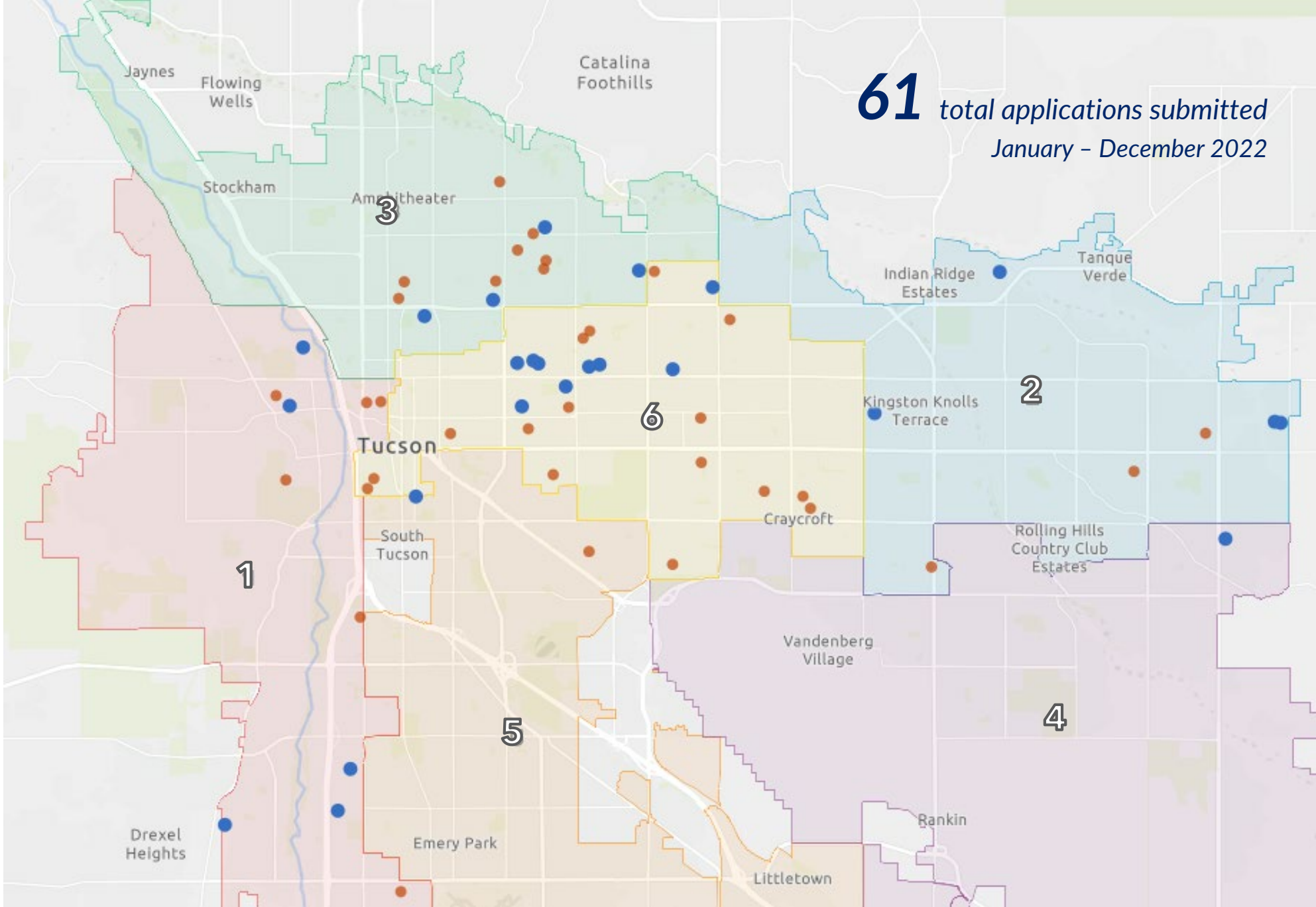


# Location

Neighborhoods / Wards

## ADU Applications

ward	 issued	 in review
1	5	6
2	4	3
3	4	8
4	1	0
5	1	1
6	9	16



**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022

Re-symbolize

# Location

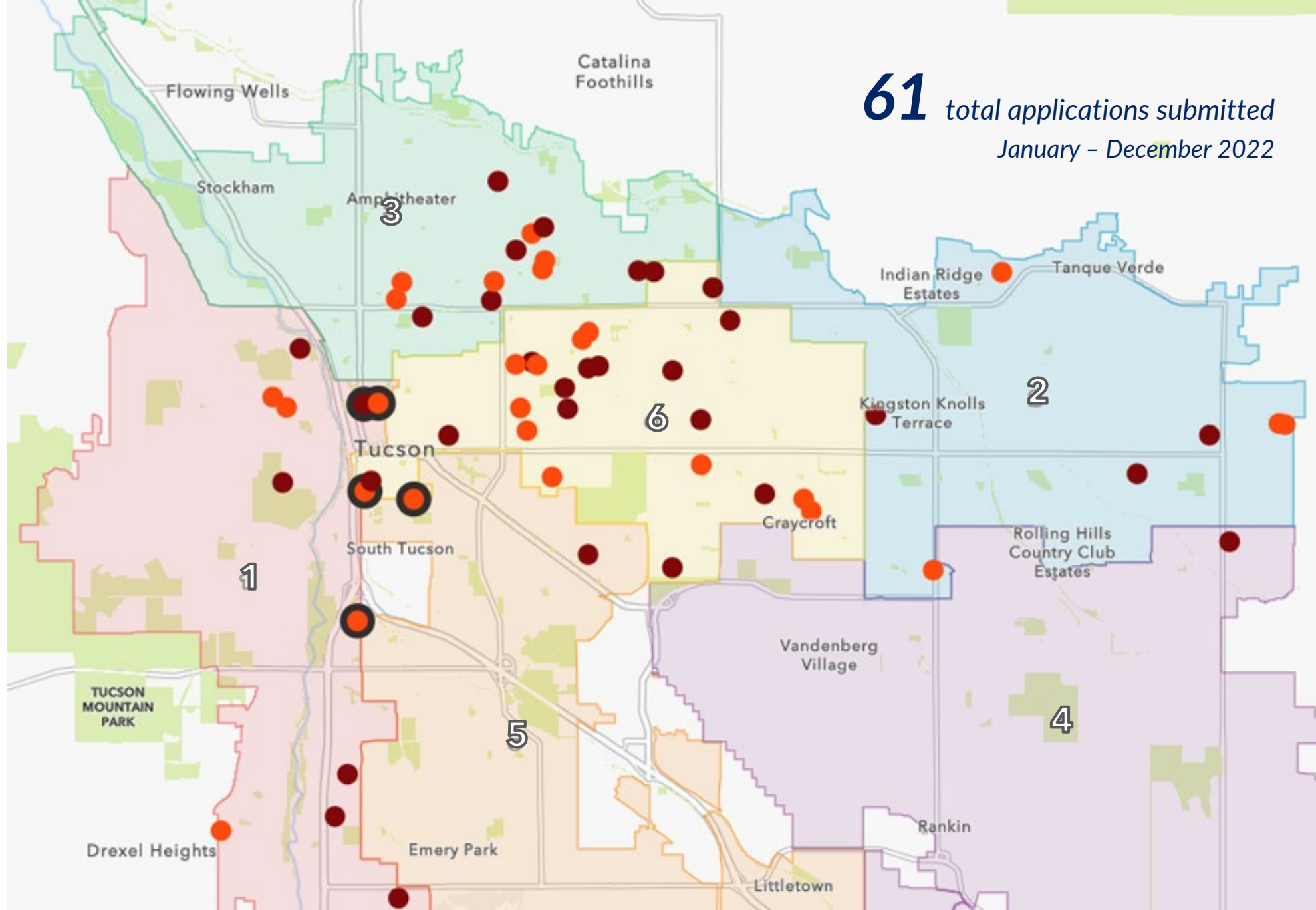
## ADU & Lot Size

	ADU sq ft 318 - 650	ADU sq ft 651 - 1,115
Lot > 6,500 sq ft		
Lot < 6,499 sq ft		

## ADU Applications

ward	Small Lot & Small ADU	Small Lot & Large ADU
1	2	1
5	1	0
6	1	0

**61** total applications submitted  
January - December 2022



# Permit & Impact Fee Case Studies

## New Construction

## Conversion

750 sq ft or less

Permit Fees \$1,790  
 Tier 1 Impact Fees \$2,748 **61%**  
**total** \$4,540

576 sq ft



\$7.90 / sq ft

previous sleeping quarters

582 sq ft



\$6.45 / sq ft

Permit Fees \$1,005  
 Tier 1 Impact Fees \$2,750 **73%**  
**total** \$3,750

751- 1,000 sq ft

Permit Fees \$2,540  
 Tier 2 Impact Fees \$4,310 **63%**  
**total** \$6,850

884 sq ft



\$7.75 / sq ft

previous garage

984 sq ft



\$9.10 / sq ft

Permit Fees \$950  
 Tier 2 Impact Fees \$4,310 **82%**  
**total** \$5,260

# Policy Updates & Resources

## Observations



- Since January 2022, items identified that made it more difficult for applicants to build an ADU than a sleeping quarters, which was not the intent of the amendments.

## To lower barriers to fully permitted ADUs, the following policy changes were made:

1. Waiver for separate utility requirement for ADUs to help reduce significant costs  
*Subject to existing capacity requirements*
2. Clearer guidance for solar, grey water, and electric vehicle charging requirements.  
Waived for conversions and attached ADUs.



# Policy Updates & Resources

## ADU Worksheet



- Resource created to help applicants learn more about the new regulations, and how to design and permit an ADU.
- Available in English and Spanish.
- Updated regularly with feedback & to match policy.

**Want to Build a Casita?**

A Casita (also known as an ADU, or Accessory Dwelling Unit) is a secondary residential unit that can be added to a lot with an existing home. Casitas are independent units that have their own kitchens, bathrooms, living and sleeping space. They can be attached or detached from the primary residence, or they can be garage conversions. They must have a permanent foundation and a cool roof.

In December 2021, the City of Tucson adopted Ordinance 11890 to allow casitas. Before then, many backyard dwellings were not allowed to be built with a kitchen.

Standards and guidelines for properties in Historic Preservation Zones (HPZ) or Neighborhood Preservation Zones (NPZ) should be followed in addition to the guidance below.

**Step 2: Design your casita.**

**Size** - the square footage of a casita is based on two guidelines: **Lot Area** and **Lot Coverage**

**Lot Area** - For lots 6,499 square feet or less in size, a casita is limited to 450 square feet of gross floor area.

**Lot Area 6,500 sq ft or more** - For lots larger than 6,500 square feet, a casita is limited to 10% of the lot size, not to exceed 1,000 square feet of gross floor area.

Lot Area	Maximum Casita Size
6,000 sq ft Lot	450 sq ft Casita
8,500 sq ft Lot	850 sq ft Casita
12,500 sq ft Lot	1,000 sq ft Casita

Examples: **Lot Area 6,499 sq ft or less** (6,000 sq ft Lot, 450 sq ft Casita) and **Lot Area 6,500 sq ft or more** (8,500 sq ft Lot, 850 sq ft Casita; 12,500 sq ft Lot, 1,000 sq ft Casita).

Depending on your zone or lot size, you may be eligible to build a home of a different size. Contact [zone1\\_desk@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:zone1_desk@tucsonaz.gov) for more information.

**Worksheet** - Follow the steps below to determine eligibility and applicable standards for permitting and building a casita on your property.

**Step 1: Determine whether your property is eligible to build a casita.**

**Step 2: Design your casita.**

**Step 3: Apply for a building permit.**

**Step 1: Determine if your property is eligible to build a casita.**

Is your property located within the City of Tucson?  no  yes

Does your property have one or two existing residences?  no  yes

What zone is your property in?

Does this zone allow residential uses?  no  yes → See **Steps 2 - 3**

At least one primary residence, but no more than two, must already exist on the property to be eligible for a casita.

Casitas are not permitted in zones that do not allow residential use, such as industrial zones. They are not permitted on sites that are multifamily or commercial use. For uses allowed in your property's zone, see **UDC 4.8 Use Tables**.

References: [Look up your property address and zone Map Tucson](#) | [For references to the UDC Unified Development Code](#)

**Lot Coverage** - Coverage areas: primary structure (home), storage, garage, proposed structure (casita), vehicular use area.

**Lot Coverage** is the area of the lot covered by improvements, including:
 

- Existing buildings (primary structure, garage, etc.)
- Vehicular use areas (either improved or unimproved)
- Storage areas
- Proposed structure (casita)

 In most cases, lot coverage is limited to 70% - 80% of your lot, depending on your zone. Check the maximum permitted lot coverage in your zone: **UDC 6.3 Dimensional Standards**.

Existing Buildings (include primary structure, garage, etc.)	sq ft
Vehicular Use Areas	sq ft
Storage Areas	sq ft
Proposed Structure	sq ft
<b>What is your total lot coverage?</b>	<b>sq ft</b>

What zone is your property in?

Maximum permitted lot coverage:  %

What size is your lot?  sq ft =  % Lot Coverage

**Parking** - one space is required for a casita

- The minimum size for a parking space is 8.5' x 18'
- On-street parking may be used if available.
- The parking space may be waived if within 1/4 mile of a transit stop or a bicycle boulevard.

To determine the required amount of vehicle parking for your entire property, see **UDC Table 7.4.4-1** (remember - include onsite parking dimensions in your vehicular use area lot coverage calculations)

**Cool Roof** - required for a newly constructed casita

A cool roof is designed to reflect more sunlight than a conventional roof, absorbing less solar energy. This lowers the temperature of the building and can save energy and money in buildings by reducing heat flow from the roof into the occupied space.

The roof should have a Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) greater than 60 or use another cool roof technology according to the **ICC Green Construction Code**.

For more information, see **Cool Roof Resources**

**Standards on the Property** - if applicable

Additional dwelling unit on the property. Standards will apply to the entire lot.

This may affect standards for parking, pedestrian facilities, and landscaping.

If consisting of three or more dwelling units multifamily **UDC 11.3.7**

For more information about commercial development standards see **UDC Article 7**

**Permit** - Floor plan, Construction document

**Permit and Impact Fees & Permit Fees** - [Impact Fees](#) | [Information Calculator](#)

Contact: [inquiries@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:inquiries@tucsonaz.gov) | [zone1\\_desk@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:zone1_desk@tucsonaz.gov)

**Zoning Requirements** - [zone1\\_desk@tucsonaz.gov](#)

**JRCS** - Shared or Separate Options

Separate utility requirements do not apply to accessory structures, including casitas. Utilities may be shared with the primary structure on the property.

Tucson Electric Power | Tucson Water | Pima County Wastewater

Addressing - A casita requires its own address. Apply for a new address with Pima County Addressing. Or write to [addressing@pima.gov](mailto:addressing@pima.gov)

Mi Casita Program - Are you interested in learning more about casitas in Tucson? Visit [Pima County Community Land Trust](http://Pima County Community Land Trust) for more information.

<https://www.tucsonaz.gov/pdsd/accessory-dwelling-units-code-amendment>



# Amnesty

Goals of an Amnesty Program would provide low-cost options for homeowners to properly permit or improve unpermitted Casitas to a safe and habitable condition through:

- application time frame
- safety inspection
- reduced fees
- without risk of penalty

## Previously Permitted Structure with Unpermitted Upgrades

- An addition or alterations to the primary home that includes a separate entrance, kitchen, bathroom, & sleeping space.
- The result of alterations that add a kitchen & bathroom to an existing accessory structure (shed or sleeping quarters).

## Casita Built without Permits

- A unit with its own kitchen, bathroom, living & sleeping space.

# Stakeholder Meeting & Survey

January 31, 2023

**20** attendees



PDSD gave a **presentation** on the background of the ADU ordinance, the guidance behind the 1-year review, and examples of the permit applications submitted in the first year.

January 18 – February 14, 2023

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional



An **online survey** was created for both ADU permit applicants and those with general feedback about ADUs in Tucson. It was shared with stakeholders & promoted on PSDS social media & ADU project webpage.

# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January - February 2023

## What is your involvement or interest in ADUs?



**15**

I have applied for an ADU permit



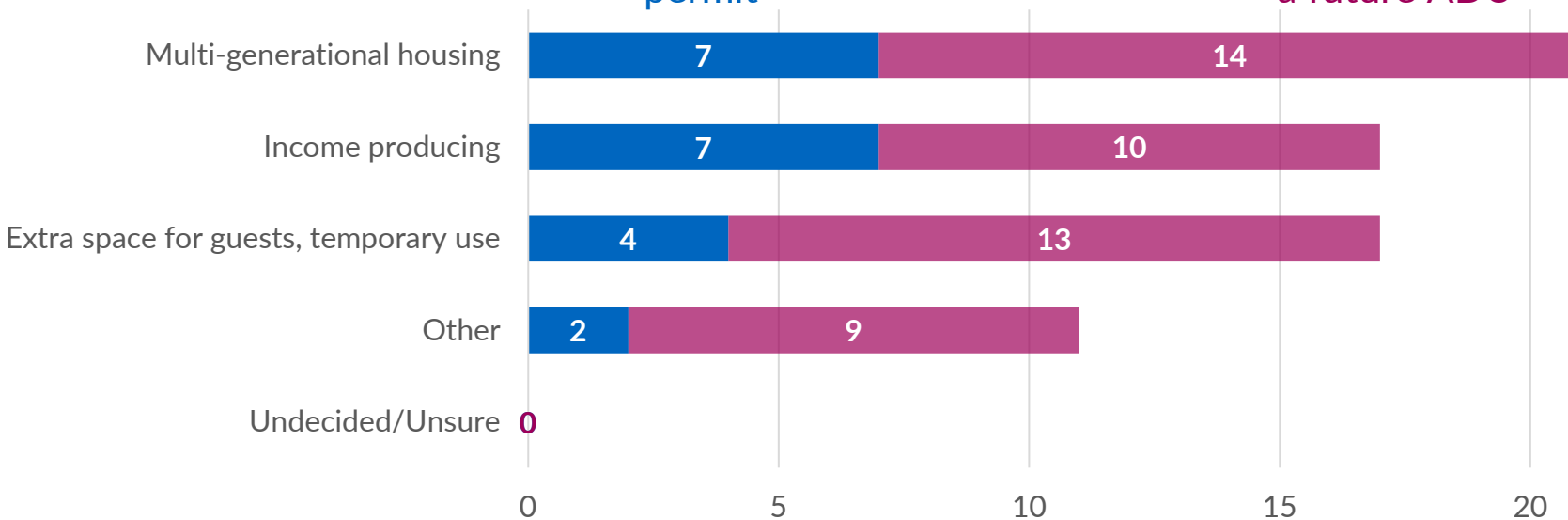
**19**

I have thought about building a future ADU



**34**

I am interested in ADUs in Tucson/my neighborhood

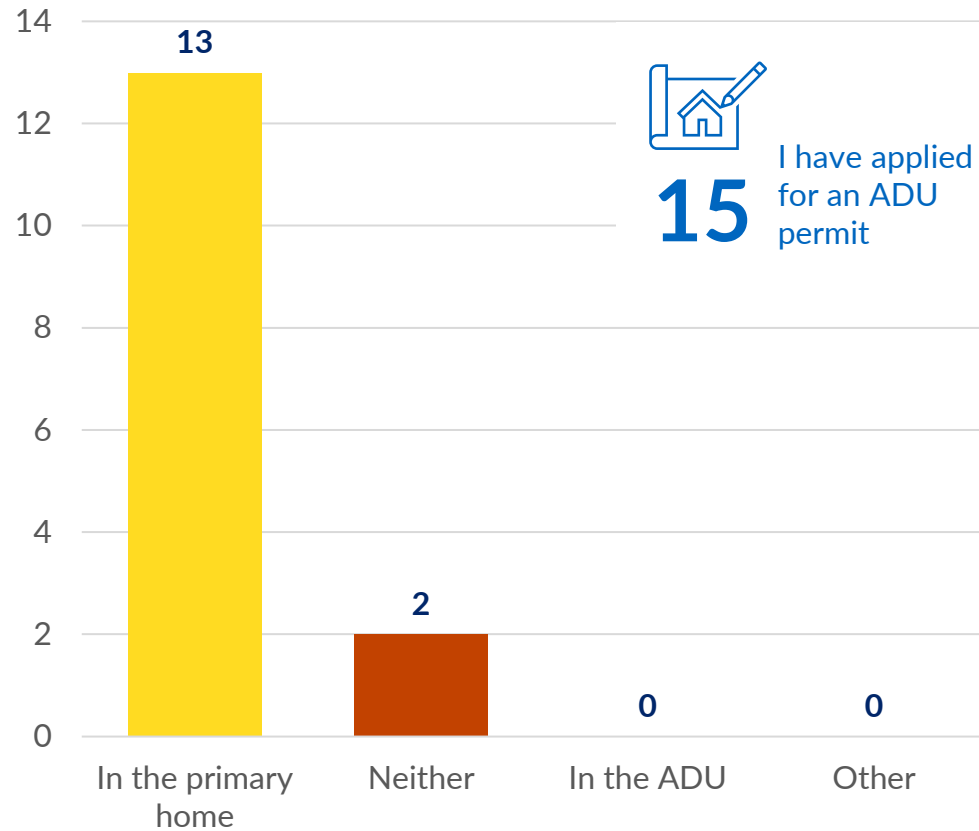


## What is the Intended Purpose of the ADU / What Factors Make you Want to Build an ADU?

# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January – February 2023

Does the property owner live:



Provide more details about the intended purpose of the ADU.

“Reconditioning a backroom that is detached from the main home so that my **mother could have a space of her own.**”

“**Grandson will live in ADU.**”

“Future residence for **elderly parents.**”

“For additional income with future use for **parents or in-laws.**”

“The structure includes an ADU for **parents of the owners** and private use as an office space during other times.”

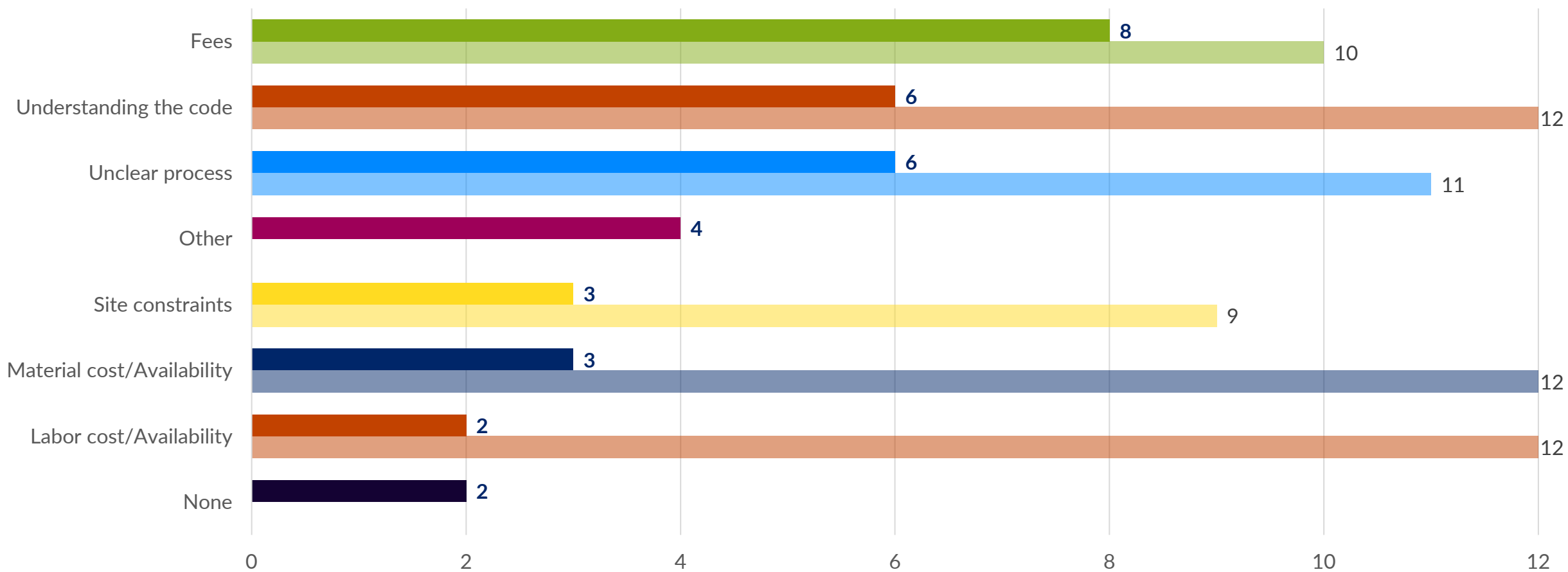
“Home for **son with developmental disability** and for his caregiver.”

# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional

January – February 2023

What obstacles did you face in the ADU process? / What obstacles do you anticipate in building a future ADU?



# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January – February 2023

Provide more information about any obstacles you faced.

“The square footage requirements are arbitrary and not based on current land use needs. They are based on an old model of land use codes where percentages and parking areas dominated.”

“The fees were extraordinary. Between water and sewer fees, electric conversion, and building permits, it almost wasn't worth it to build it.”

“Impact fees being significantly higher for ADU vs sleeping quarters eliminated the kitchen for this project.”

“It's been hard to get our questions regarding the Plan Review Comments answered in a clear manner that we, as laypersons, can understand and act on. We also would really appreciate referrals to resources/companies/individuals that can help us with next steps.”

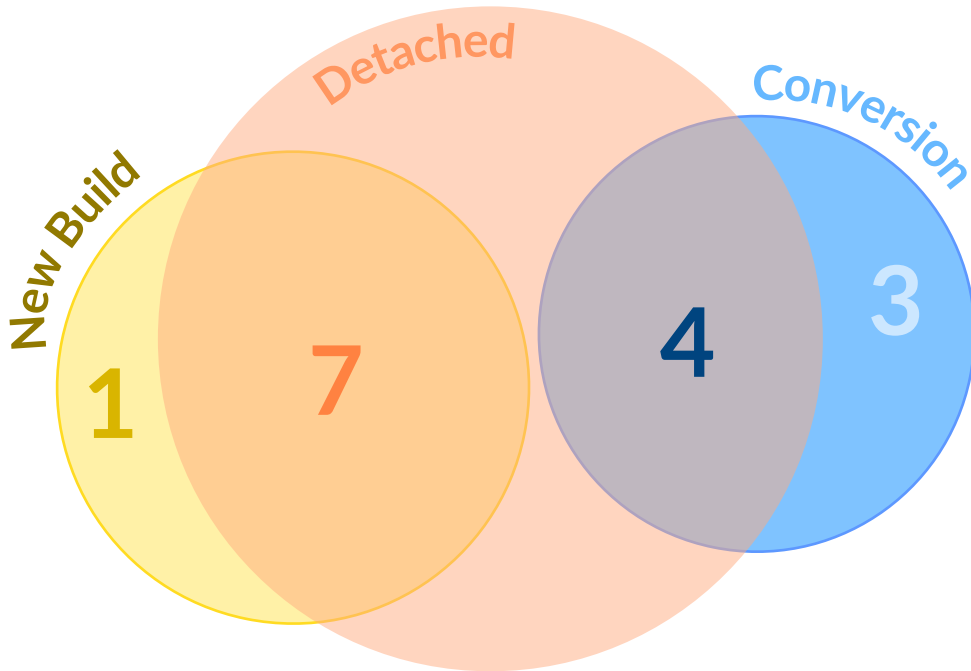
# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January - February 2023

Has your ADU been built/completed?



How would you describe the type of ADU?



Provide more details about the intended purpose of the ADU.

“This structure will replace the current carport / shed / ramada of similar size.”

“Converted workshop and carport.”

“Converted a storage structure/carport into an ADU.”

“The process has been very complicated because nobody really gives guidance as to how to get an existing building into compliance.”

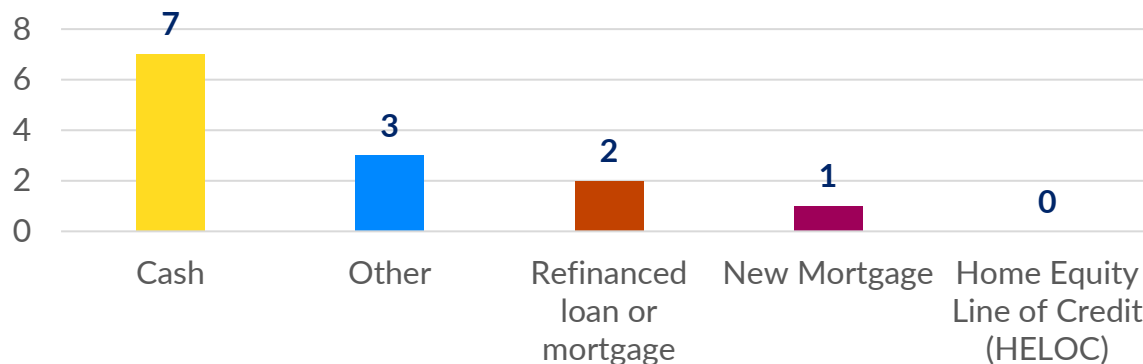
# Survey Results

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January – February 2023

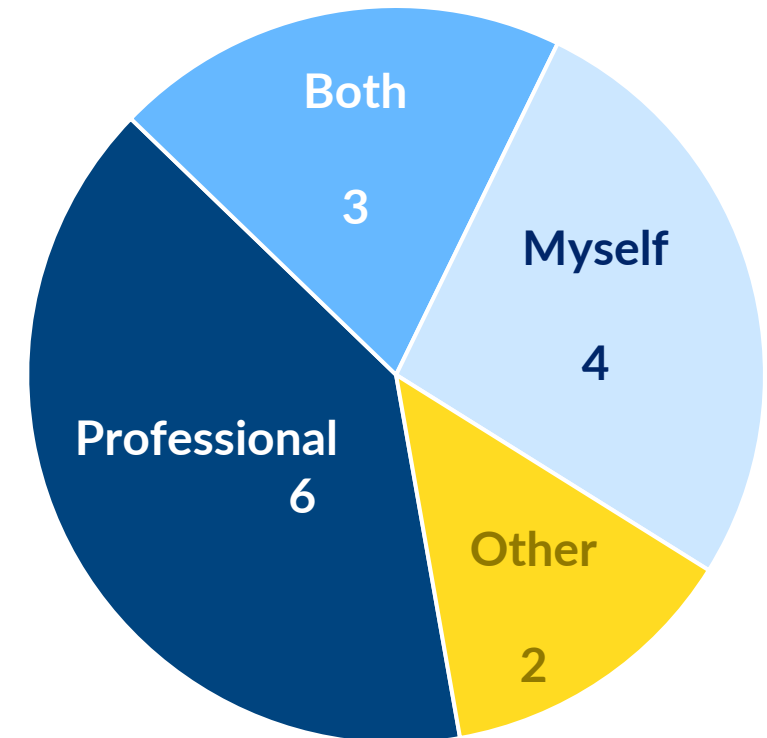
## What's the estimated cost of the ADU?



## What is the funding or financing plan for the ADU?



## Did you design/build the ADU yourself or hire a professional?



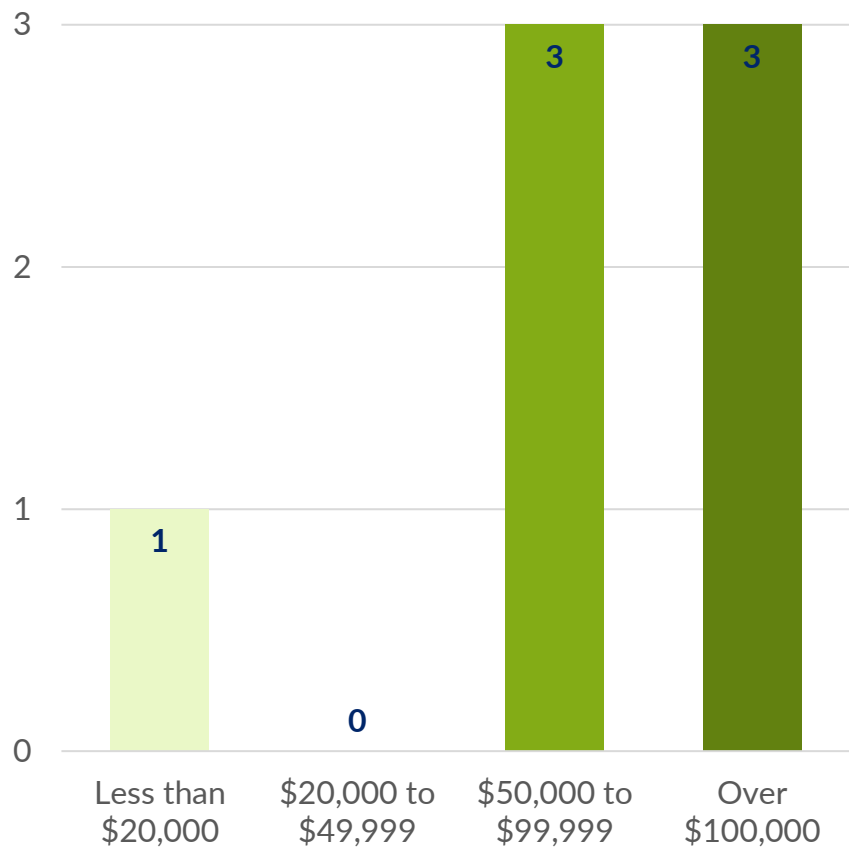


# Survey Results

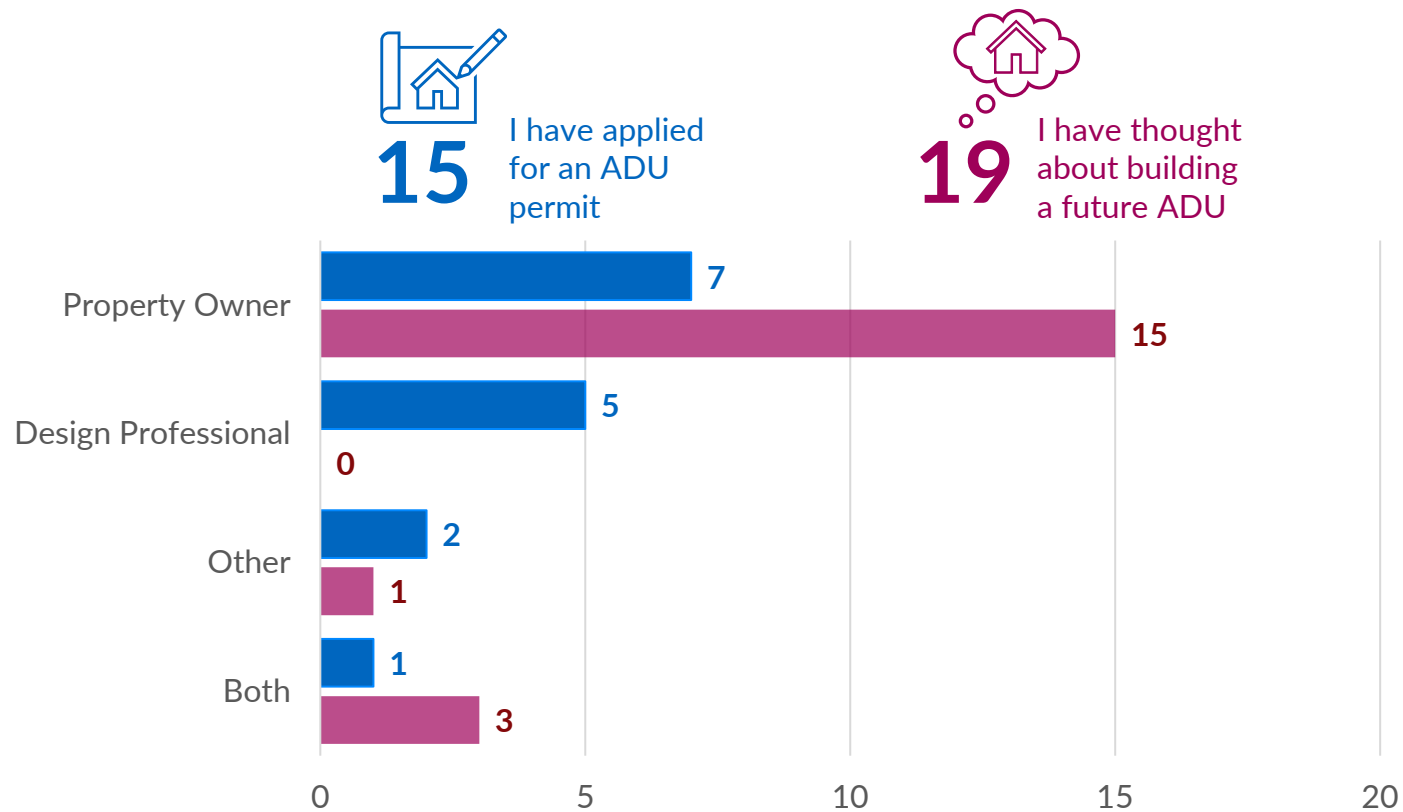
**68** responses submitted; many answers optional

January – February 2023

What is the range of your total household income?



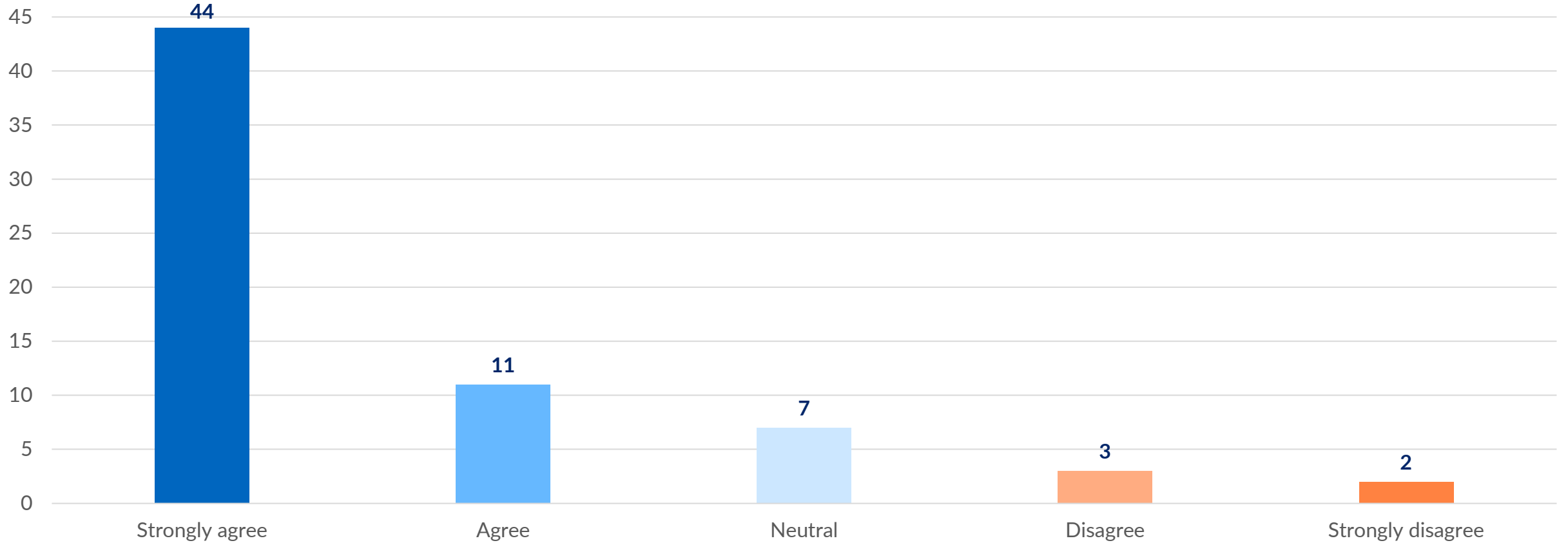
Are you a Property Owner or a Design Professional?



# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January - February 2023

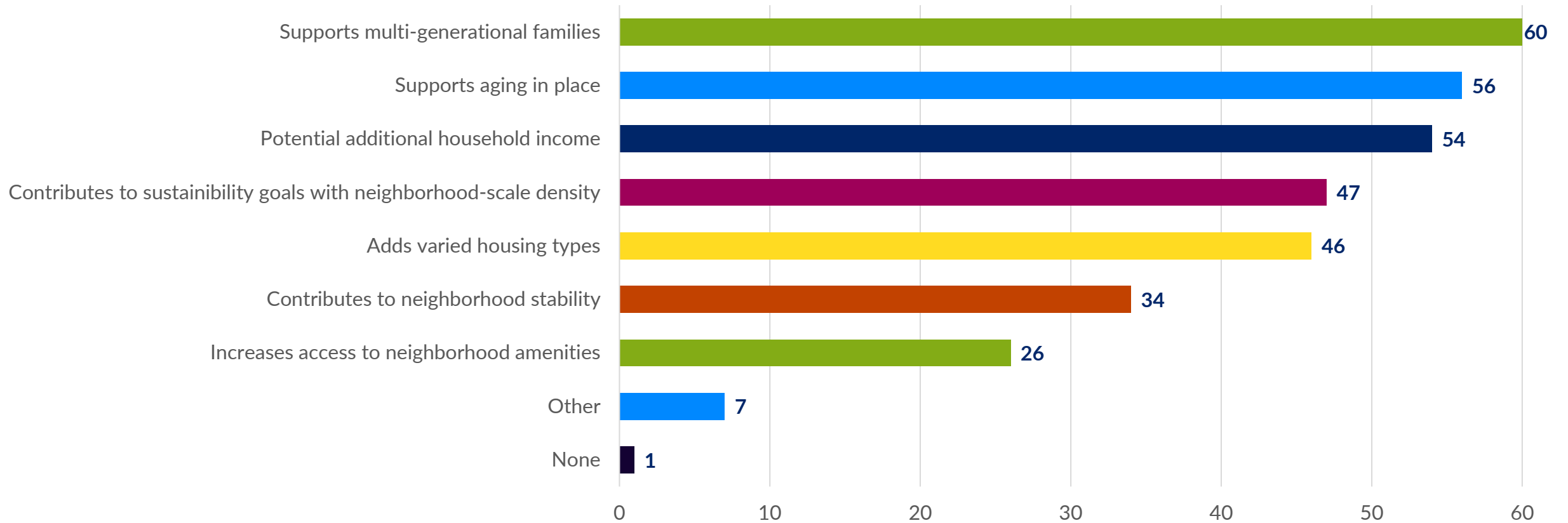
Allowing permitted ADUs is a benefit to Tucson communities.



# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January – February 2023

What benefits do you think ADUs provide to Tucson communities?



# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January – February 2023

What benefits do you think ADUs provide to Tucson communities?

“Provides more housing in a limited rental market.”

“Supports semi-independent living for family members with disabilities. Close enough for ongoing help/supervision, but separate living space.”

“Hopefully if more widely accepted will prevent further commercialization surrounding the U of A and decrease or stabilize and construction of high-rises impacting neighborhood aesthetics and quiet enjoyment of our beautiful mountain ranges.”

“We need density for transit projects to have a shot at working. I'm personally disgusted by how dangerous our streets are and can't wait to have better transit and safer walking and cycling infrastructure. I hope ADUs are part of that solution.”

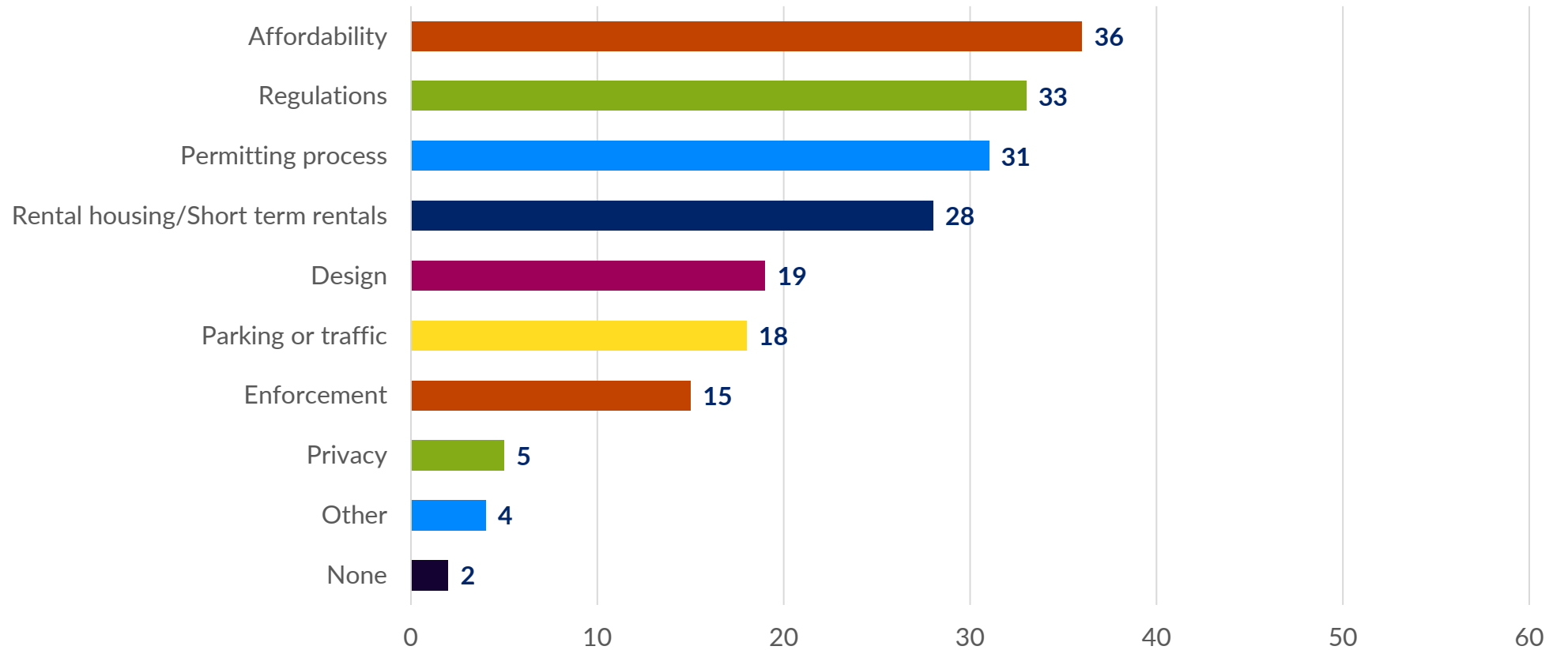
“If we're serious about combating climate change, we need them and we need the rules around them to be relaxed. If we don't want waste our resources facilitating sprawl and destroying pristine desert habitat, then we need to relax the ADU rules.”

“Allowing loved ones to be close enough to the family but still have their independence to call their own space a home. Adult living with a dual housing area so that they don't depend on government assistance programs for housing.”

# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January – February 2023

What concerns do you have about ADUs in Tucson?



# Survey Results

**68** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January – February 2023

What concerns do you have about ADUs in Tucson?

“The size restrictions on ADUs seem arbitrary. Impact and permitting fees are substantial. Requiring extra parking only worsens heat island and space concerns.”

“Short term rental units have driven up the cost of rent for permanent residents. It is very difficult for seniors to afford quality housing.”

“Concerned about pedestrian safety if in fact parking and traffic are greatly increased. Sidewalks and safe pedestrian areas are severely lacking in most neighborhoods and may defeats some of the benefits of allowing ADUs.”

“I would like to see an increased allowed building height for ADUs. One example would be to have a garage with an ADU above. This would preserve more outdoor space for the property's tenants.”

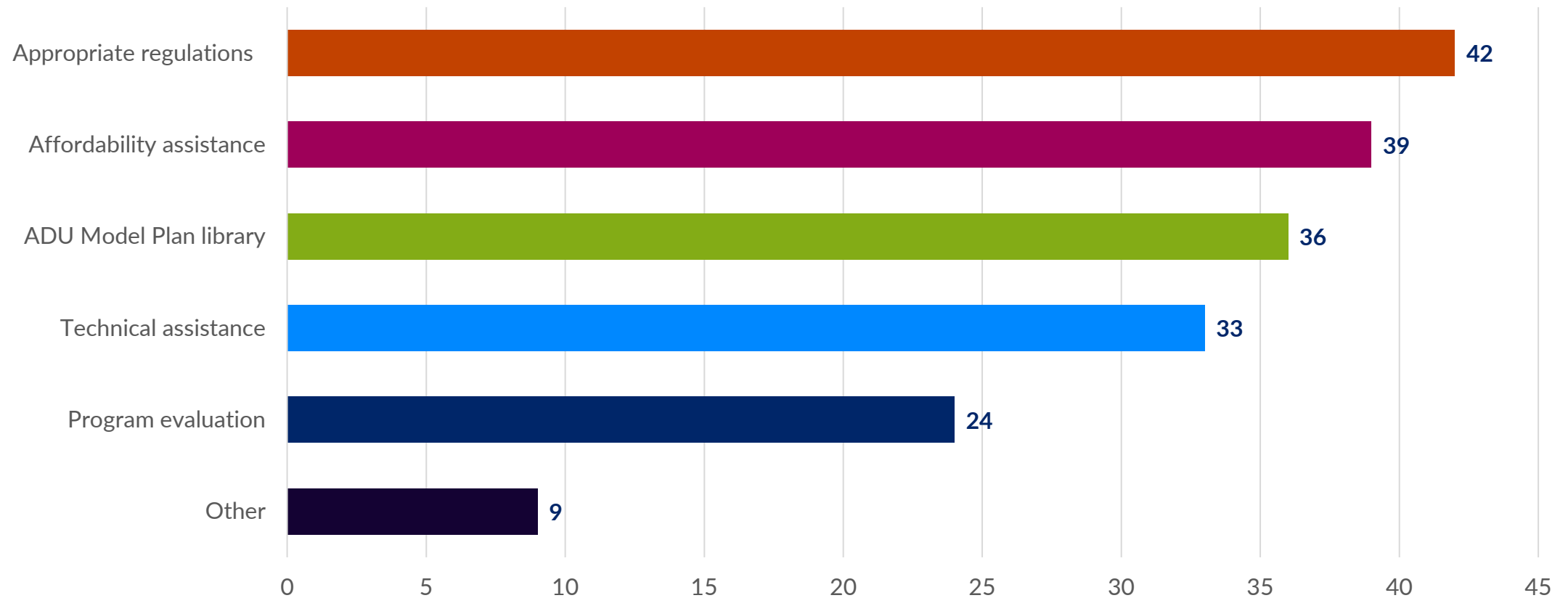
“Other flourishing cities have significantly less restrictive guidelines which contributes to their success.”

“More information on how to meet these requirements without getting into a brawl with the city inspectors or neighbors regarding what can be built, renovated or remodeled.”

# Survey Results

**67** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January 2023

What are some ways that ADU concerns could be addressed?



# Survey Results

**67** responses submitted; many answers optional  
January 2023

What are some ways that ADU concerns could be addressed?

“Reduce fees for ADUs. They are smaller and not the primary property. I was charged as though I was building a new primary residence on an empty plot of land.”

“Improve public outreach for program evaluation.”

“Permitting office employees must provide accurate, up-to-date information.”

“Relax the requirements so that it's easier for families to design an ADU that meets their family's need and their lot configuration. It would also be helpful if there was financial assistance for moderate income household, in addition to low-income households. our local government should incentivize this type of construction.”

“Would love to see a model plan Library and other ADU resources (such as builders, possible access to list of voucher tenants seeking units) compiled by the City.”

“I feel like enforcement is a key component. I do think that program reevaluation and tweaking should be a scheduled priority.”



# Recommendations *Based on data analysis & stakeholder feedback*

## 1. Develop ADU 'pre-approved' model plan catalog

- Resource that saves time & money for ADU builders
- Design competition to promote ADUs & recognize local talent

## 2. Create ADU Directory

- Help connect homeowners with contact info for organizations & companies that support ADUs.

## 3. Coordinate & Promote COT & Community ADU Programs & Partnerships

- The ADU Improvement Pilot Program will provide financial & technical assistance to low-income homeowners improve an existing ADU or accessory structure that can be improved to an ADU. *HCD - Tucson Housing & Community Development HCD*
- Mi Casita educational materials & financial assistance program. *(PCCLT - Pima County Community Land Trust*

## 4. Continue to develop amnesty options

- Encourage homeowners to bring unpermitted ADUs built before December 2021 'up to code'
- Continue to work one-on-one with homeowners, tailor responses to varied examples
- Connect to affordability assistance programs through interdepartmental & community partnerships

## 5. Reevaluate impact fee amounts for small infill projects like ADUs during next review cycle

- Impact fees remain one of largest considerations when deciding between ADUs & sleeping quarters
- Financial barriers may continue to encourage unpermitted structures & undermine the intent of the ADU ordinance

# Precedent Programs

## ADUniverse *Seattle, WA*



City website with ADU regulations & resources, pre-approved model plans, & city-wide data

<https://aduniverse-seattlecitygis.hub.arcgis.com/>

## ADU Fast Track program *Raleigh, NC*



**Raleigh**

Fast Track plans have been reviewed for Building Code compliance before becoming part of an online ADU gallery

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/db482b2fdb34ebeb174438a091097d8>

## Pre-Approved Standard Plans *Los Angeles, CA*



Under the Standard Plan Program, plans are designed by private licensed architects, then reviewed and pre-approved by LADBS for compliance with Codes.

<https://ladbs.org/adu/standard-plan-program/approved-standard-plans>

# Additional Resources



## AARP Demonstration Grants

Implementing **accessory dwelling unit (ADU) design competitions** that increase public understanding of this housing option and encourage the implementation of ADU supportive policies.

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2023/2023-challenge.html>

Grant funding will provide approximately **\$10,000 to \$15,000** per project.

# Timeline & Next Steps

**November  
2020**  
Initiation

**January  
2022**  
ADUs Allowed

**Fall  
2022**  
TDC Online Launch

**March 2023**  
Mayor &  
Council Review

Continued Analysis & Review

Survey

Research / Analysis  
Stakeholder Outreach  
Public Hearings

**December  
2021**  
Mayor &  
Council  
Adoption

**July  
2022**  
Utility & Green  
Building Waiver  
Policy Change

**January  
2023**  
1 Year Review  
Meeting

# Thank You!



**More information will be available on the project webpage:**

<https://www.tucsonaz.gov/pdsd/accessory-dwelling-units-code-amendment>