

# ADUs, not sexy but potentially part of the solution to the need for affordable housing

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Affordable Housing](#), [Sharing your reading](#) April 23, 2021

 *Latest post in a series on Affordable Housing* 


Councilwoman Van Wirt shares another piece of her reading. The productive conversation on affordable housing continues.

In an **earlier post**, Gadfly remarked that Councilwoman Van Wirt was nudging the City toward a quick ADU pilot program, like right now.

Councilwoman Van Wirt: “I would actually urge your committee to come up with a pilot program. Let’s just try something out of the gate. Let’s just change a zoning code to allow RDUs in a targeted area, serviced by public transit, maybe a 10-block area. . . . I don’t see why we wouldn’t try it. Let’s see what happens. . . . This crisis is right now upon us, and if we can come up with some tools that actually work now, I think that’s a good idea.”



Paige Van Wirt

21h · 



Are you wondering what an ADU is? An Accessory Dwelling Unit is a converted or new structure in your back yard to rent out. As Anna Smith has pointed out, this option has been successfully used in South Bethlehem in the past as a way to ease the housing crunch, and could be expanded to all of Bethlehem, if we change our zoning code. The ones in South Bethlehem were grandfathered in when Bethlehem implemented the new comprehensive zoning code in 2012. ADU’s are currently not allowed in our residential-zoned districts. ADUs are not sexy, and are not necessarily new. But they are a proven viable strategy to increase our stock of affordable housing. The article below is short and easy introduction to the basics of ADUs.

**“Who can afford to build one of those ADU’s in their back yard?  
Who is this really serving?”**



Anna Smith

Thanks for sharing this, Paige. The break down of costs and financing options is very helpful to understand the strengths/drawbacks of this approach to affordable housing. I would be interested to hear from residents throughout Bethlehem about interest in ADU construction (particularly if technical assistance or project management were offered through a public or private program). Is there enough demand among property owners to justify the time/work required to explore a change in the zoning code? This is why I think we need an affordable housing task force that incorporates residents from across the city with connections to neighborhood groups, as well as representatives from organizations that can help brainstorm ways to offer the assistance necessary to make something like this work.

The Bethlehem Gadfly