

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: October 27, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director of Planning and Housing Policy/City Planner, 519-783-8929

PREPARED BY: Katie Anderl, Project Manager - Planning, 519-783-8926

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Wards

DATE OF REPORT: October 9, 2025

REPORT NO.: DSD-2025-411

SUBJECT: Enabling Four Units – One Year Follow-up

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council endorse the next steps as outlined in report DSD-2025-411.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the uptake of additional dwelling units (ADUs) following approval of new zoning regulations in 2024 that enabled up to four residential units on a lot which permits a single detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling or street-townhouse dwelling.
- The key finding of this report is that there has been a meaningful increase in the number of four-unit dwellings since the new regulations were enacted.
- There are no financial implications associated with this recommendation.
- Community engagement included a survey on the Enabling Four Units EngageKitchener page to obtain feedback from homeowners and developers that have added ADUs to their property and residents living in neighbourhoods where additional units have been added. Staff received 288 responses to the survey.
- This report supports the delivery of core services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2024, the City of Kitchener implemented Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law regulations allowing up to four dwelling units on lots which permit single detached, semi-detached, or street townhouse dwellings. This initiative has significantly expanded the potential for additional dwelling units (ADUs) within neighborhoods. Building permit data indicates an increase in the number of triplexes and fourplexes since enactment of zoning regulations and a reduction in the number of overall projects requiring minor variances.

Efforts to promote ADU development have included broad-based public outreach and the introduction of resources such as the "Guide to Additional Dwelling Units", a user-friendly guide available on the City's website to assist homeowners and developers seeking to add ADUs to their properties. Staff recommend several next steps to improve community understanding of ADUs and what is permitted, to support homeowners and builders in navigating the approvals and permitting process, and to promote the CMHC Housing Design Catalogue by becoming a Local Partner.

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

BACKGROUND:

The City's Strategic Plan, Official Plan, and Housing for All Strategy recognize the importance of using a broad range of tools to advance critical housing objectives, and the City of Kitchener has been a leader in permitting ADUs on residential lots. Since the mid-1990s, Kitchener has permitted two dwelling units (i.e., duplexes) on most residentially zoned properties. Since 2021, three dwelling units (triplexes) and backyard homes have been permitted on many lots.

The Enabling Four Units project is one of many supported by Council since their endorsement of Kitchener's Housing Pledge in March 2023. The Housing Pledge includes strategies and actions to support the building of 35,000 more homes by 2031. Enabling Four Units further implements and aligns with recommendations of the Enabling Missing Middle and Affordable Housing Feasibility Study (April 2023) and is a key action of the City's Housing Accelerator Fund application supporting the City in achieving housing commitments.

In March of 2024, Council Approved Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments to permit up to four dwelling units on lots which permit single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings and street-townhouse dwellings. The Council resolution directed staff to:

"... provide data regarding the number of four-unit dwellings, including discrete Additional Dwelling Units constructed following approval of the Proposed By-law attached to Development Services Department report DSD-2024-066, and report back to the Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee by the Fall of 2025 with additional recommendations, or to provide for information if no additional recommendations are proposed."

Permitting four units as-of-right was a requirement to receive Housing Accelerator Funding.

REPORT:

Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs) include any dwelling units added to a property with a single detached dwelling, a semi-detached dwelling unit or a street-townhouse dwelling unit as the principal use. ADUs may be attached or detached, and up to three may be permitted on a lot together with the principal dwelling, resulting in buildings commonly referred to as a duplex, triplex, fourplex, or a backyard home (which may have one or two units), or a combination of such buildings.

The key zoning changes in March 2024 included:

- Permitting a fourth dwelling unit on many residential lots
- Reducing parking requirements for ADUs
- Reducing minimum lot width requirements for ADUs
- Increasing the height and the number of units permitted in a backyard home
- Further regulating built form and site layout only to the degree necessary for safety and functionality

The purpose of the Enabling Four Units project was to permit gentle intensification in existing neighbourhoods to increase the housing supply and housing choice. In determining the success of the new regulations staff considered and are reporting on the following:

1. The number of building permits issued for ADUs by dwelling type
2. How many ADUs are on lots which would not have previously been eligible
3. How many developments have required minor variances to zoning
4. Feedback from the general public and homeowners/builders constructing ADUs
5. Feedback from the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan Builder Workshop

Each of these measures is further discussed in the sections below along with any additional recommendations.

Number of Building Permits Issued

Staff have reviewed the number of building permits issued for ADUs from 2019 – June 2025 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Building permits issued for Additional Dwelling Units in Kitchener, 2019-2025

Year	Duplex (1 ADU attached)	Triplex (2 ADUs attached)	Fourplex (4 ADUs attached)	Backyard Home (1 – 2 ADUs detached)
2019	201 (211 units)*	3 (6 units)	1 (1 unit)**	-
2020	276 (285 units)	6 (9 units)	-	-
2021	368 (381 units)	9 (10 units)	1 (1 unit)**	4 (4 units)
2022	517 (542 units)	10 (11 units)	-	14 (14 units)
2023	646 (670 units)	20 (29 units)	3 (6 units)	27 (27 units)
2024	569 (595 units)	28 (40 units)	14 (36 units)	21 (22 units)
2025 (Jan-Jun)	235 (245 units)	17 (26 units)	8 (24 units)	15 (18 units)

* a building permit can include several units. The number in brackets indicates the number of units created.

** built as a multiple dwelling rather than a single with ADUs

From January 2024 – June 2025 there have been 22 permits issued for fourplexes, resulting in 60 new units. There are also several examples of other configurations of four units on a lot, with a ‘double-double’ (2 units in a principal dwelling and 2 units in a back yard home) being a common approach. A photo inventory showing examples of completed or under construction four-unit configurations is provided in Attachment A – Newly Created Four Unit Dwellings and Two Unit Backyard Homes.

Building Permit data shows that triplexes saw significant uptake in 2023 following enactment of Bill 23, which amended the Planning Act to permit up to 3 dwelling units on Parcels of Urban Residential Lands across the province. Data shows that 2023 also had a record number of building permits issued for duplexes and backyard homes. While fewer duplexes and backyard homes were added in 2024 than in 2023, the number of permits exceeds those issued in 2022 and is positive given the current economic climate and the slower pace of construction experienced in other types of residential construction such as detached homes and condominiums. Construction

of triplexes and fourplexes continued to increase steadily in 2024 and 2025 following the City’s approval of the new 4-unit regulations.

Staff also explored where in the city ADUs were most frequently added comparing distribution from 2019 to 2023 with 2024 to 2025 (see Attachment B - Kitchener Additional Dwelling Units Permits Issued – Map A and Map B). It is interesting to observe that in the 2019-2023 period triplexes, fourplexes and back yard homes were primarily built in the Central City (generally Wards 9, 10 and the Vanier neighbourhood of Ward 3), whereas in 2024 to 2025 ADUs were frequently constructed in Established Neighbourhoods including in residential areas developed from about 1950 to 1980 in Wards 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8. Established neighbourhoods are often characterised with large lots and older more modestly sized housing stock, which lend themselves to redevelopment and intensification. Duplexes continue to be added in most residential neighbourhoods, with a notable concentration in new subdivisions, demonstrating high likelihood of duplexes being added shortly after construction of the principal dwelling.

The new regulations increased the number of lots eligible for triplexes, fourplexes and backyard homes by about 45% from 28,575 lots to 41,451 lots, by reducing minimum lot width from 13.1 metres (or zone minimum if greater than 13.1 metres) to 10.5 metres (or the zone minimum if greater than 10.5 metres) in suburban areas, and simply relying on the zone minimum in the central city. Following the new zoning regulations being enacted, approximately 42% of all lots with triplexes, fourplexes or backyard homes are on lots with widths less than 13.1 metres (Table 2).

Table 2: Building Permits issued for ADUs on lots with widths less/greater than 13.1 m

	Lot width less than 13.1 m	Lot width more than 13.1 m	Total Building Permits
Backyard Homes	11 (31%)	25 (69%)	36
Triplexes	24 (53%)	21 (47%)	45
Fourplexes	8 (36%)	14 (64%)	22
	43 (42%)	60 (58%)	103

To date, staff believe that most ADUs operate as rental units or may support family living arrangements. The City has not received any applications that would provide for ownership of an ADU such as a Plan of Condominium, however, there has been some interest from builders in exploring this in the future. Staff is not aware of any other alternative approaches to standard rental tenure such as co-operative housing or co-housing being pursued. Alternative tenures (such as owning shares in a building’s corporation or owning a percentage of a property’s title) remain an option and staff recommend that property owners seek independent legal advice to explore these further. Staff continues to be open to exploring other development approaches such as cottage courts (several small homes on a lot sharing a private road and other amenities) or land lease developments with interested applicants. These approaches may require additional Planning Act approvals (such as a Vacant Land or Common Elements Condominium) and may require special zoning consideration.

Supporting the Application and Approvals Process

Streamlining approvals. In addition to enabling additional units, the Enabling Four Units project also sought to streamline approvals processes. To achieve this, staff completed a LEAN review of Planning and Building application, review and inspection processes associated with additional dwelling units. This review led to refinement and enhancements of the Zoning (Occupancy) Certificate and Building Permit processes.

Awareness and education campaign. The Official Plan Policies and Zoning By-laws came into full force and effect in June 2024, and to promote uptake staff undertook a robust educational and outreach campaign in September 2024 which included:

- Launch of the “Guide to Additional Dwelling Units” (Image 1) and updates to the website
- Webinars and presentations to public, real estate professionals, and development industry at the Annual Building Industry Workshop (November 2024)
- Social media campaign
- In person outreach at Kitchener Market including pop-up consultations for those seeking to add ADUs (Image 2)
- An Outdoor Projects Outreach series March to May 2025 to proactively provide information to residents interested in common outdoor construction projects including those related to adding ADUs. This included a second social media campaign, a booth the Home and Garden Show and 2 outreach events at the Kitchener Market.

Image 1: Guide to Additional Dwelling Units

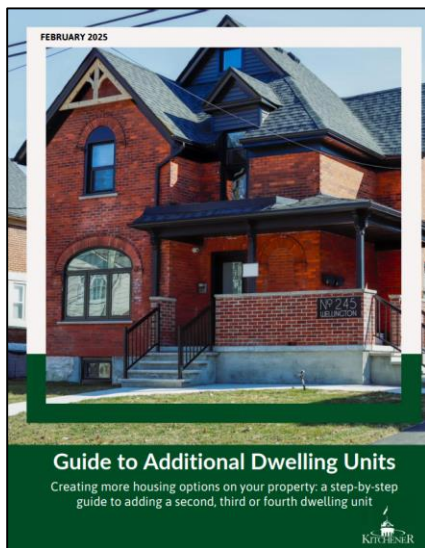


Image 2: Enabling Four Units Consultation at the Kitchener Market



Reducing the need for Minor Variances. The updated regulations also sought to reduce additional processes such as minor variance applications by increasing zoning flexibility and focussing regulations to those required to provide a safe and functional development, and to ensure new developments align with characteristics of communities. Staff have examined and compared applications for minor variances requested for proposals adding ADUs of all types, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 and from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. This encompasses one full year of the new zoning and compares it to the year prior. Backyard homes and up to three units on a lot were permitted during both timeframes which allows us to consider the effectiveness of the updated regulations.

The total number of minor variance applications for projects proposing ADUs was reduced from 35 applications from July 2023 – June 2024 to 26 applications from July 2024 – June 2025 (a minor variance application may include requests for relief from several regulations). The most frequently requested variances in 2023 to 2024 (prior to the new zoning) were for reduced lot width, reduced setback to parking, reduced number of required parking spaces and reduced lot area. These are shown in the Table 3 below and compare the frequency in 2023 – 2024 to 2024 – 2025. Overall, amendments to these most frequently requested variances resulted in 46 fewer variances requested (87% reduction).

Table 3. Most frequent Minor Variances requested for proposals that included ADU(s)

Most frequent Variances	July 2023 – June 2024	July 2024 – June 2025	% change
Reduction to lot width	20	5	75% reduction
Reduced setback to parking space	18	0	100% reduction
Reduced number of required parking spaces	9	2	78% reduction
Reduced lot area*	6	0	100% reduction
Total	53	7	87% reduction

*Regulation was removed entirely through Bill 23


Requests for minor variances for other regulations have not experienced substantial changes. This is appropriate and expected. The purpose of the Minor Variance process is to allow consideration of zoning variances on a case-by-case basis. Like for all development, lots with ADUs may have unique site conditions or circumstances that result in proposed development not being able to comply with regulations. Variances will continue to be required for some proposals. Staff suggest that the zoning changes in 2024 have made a meaningful difference and have reduced the number of variances routinely being requested, and which were commonly supported, to reduce the barriers to adding ADUs.

Two areas where the City continues to experience requests for variances include the required 1.1 metre unobstructed walkway and maximum driveway widths. Regulations in these areas were also identified by developers who responded to the Enabling Four Units Follow-Up Survey. Additional comments and information are provided in the following section of this report.


Enabling Four Units Follow-Up Survey: What We Heard

In order to learn about perceptions and experiences building ADUs and living in neighbourhoods where ADUs have been added staff launched a public survey through Engage Kitchener in July 2025. The survey was promoted to webpage subscribers and through the City’s social media channels and was open from July 14 to August 4, 2025. Staff received a total of 288 responses from homeowners and developers who have recently constructed or are planning to build ADUs of all types, and residents who had perspectives to share about ADUs. Key takeaways and staff responses to common themes are provided below.

WHAT WE HEARD




A survey for homeowner and builders constructing ADUs and residents was available on Engage Kitchener July 14 to August 4, 2025.



288 responses were received:

- 38 Homeowners or Builders adding ADUs
- 250 residents providing general feedback



A City-led Builder Workshop was held August 27, 2025 focusing on the proposed Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan and incentives for ADUs discussing the financial challenges to building ADUs.

What We Heard from Property Owners and Developers Building ADUs

Staff received responses from 38 respondents identifying as homeowners or builders who have built or are planning to build ADUs. The majority of respondents indicated that comments provided relate to construction of a backyard home or a fourplex. From the follow-up survey staff learned that these types of dwellings are often built and operated as investment properties with about half of proponents becoming first time landlords. These developments require acquisition of property and in many cases either demolition and rebuild, or a substantial renovation with possible additions. Developers comment that the process is complex, requires substantial financial investment, and often takes more time than expected to develop plans and building designs, obtain approvals and permits, and complete construction. Most projects require a Zoning Certificate and Building Permit, while about 1/3 of respondents indicated that the project would also require another approval such as a curb-cub permit or a minor variance/consent(severance) from the Committee of Adjustment.

Themes	Staff Comments and Next Steps
<p>The application and approval process is more complex than anticipated, and revising plans to comply with regulations can be time consuming and delays costly.</p>	<p>Staff acknowledge that infill development on existing lots can be complex, and careful consideration must be given when acquiring lands, evaluating site constraints, and designing dwellings that will fit on various sized lots. This includes not only the size and design of the building, but also ensuring space for walkways, parking, landscaping, and servicing. Staff acknowledge that in some instances applicants are required to revise and resubmit site plans, obtain minor variances and/or revise building permit drawings in order to achieve compliance with regulations and code, which may add time and cost to projects.</p> <p>In an effort to help builders and homeowners understand the processes and zoning rules, a Guide to Additional Dwelling Units was launched in 2024. This guide includes an overview of processes, zoning regulations, illustrative examples, and contact information.</p> <p>Staff is also available to meet with applicants in advance of finalizing plans and submitting applications to review and provide early feedback on the proposal. Early consultation will also provide an opportunity to review processes, required applications and ensure that applicants are aware of expected costs and fees and timelines for review.</p> <p>As part of the City’s ongoing digital transformation projects, the Zoning (Occupancy) Certificate will be added to the City’s application web-portal which is already used for Building Permits and Business Licenses. This provides for a streamlined service-window for applicants to submit an application, make payments, receive approvals and schedule inspections. This improvement is currently scheduled for 2026.</p> <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the ‘Guide to Additional Dwelling Units’ and update as needed to help support applicants through the design and approvals process • Develop a ‘pre-submission’ process for Planning and Building staff to provide early feedback on ADU projects • Add the Zoning (Occupancy) Certificate applications to the public portal

<p>The Zoning Certificate adds unnecessary process steps.</p>	<p>Developers of ADUs have also inquired whether certain process steps such as Zoning (Occupancy) Certificates (ZCs) can be eliminated to reduce review timelines. Zoning must be reviewed for each ADU proposal, and ZCs are a tool that verifies that a proposal will comply with zoning by-law regulations. A ZC is issued prior to issuance of the building permit and is applicable law. In the absence of Site Plan Control for developments with 10 dwelling units or less, the ZC is the most effective tool for planning to confirm zoning compliance and is required by the Zoning By-law and enabled by the Planning Act.</p> <p>Applicants are encouraged to apply for a ZC prior to submitting a building permit application to ensure that the proposal will comply to avoid delays through the building permit review. In the absence of a ZC a zoning compliance review would occur as part of the Building Permit review process, and review processes and fee structures would need to be amended to accommodate changes. Staff is concerned that when the zoning review occurs following submission of fully developed building permit drawings, this change may cause further delays and costs to applicants as proposals found not to comply with zoning would need to be redesigned and resubmitted.</p> <p>Staff do not recommend eliminating the requirement for a Zoning (Occupancy) Certificate.</p>
<p>Zoning regulations are a barrier</p>	<p>Those developing ADUs have also commented that zoning regulations are barrier to development. Zoning regulations apply to all development on all lots and ensure that buildings, driveways, etc., are designed in such a way that they will be functional and safe for residents and neighbours. Minimum setbacks ensure space between buildings and property lines for natural light, landscaping, access between buildings and to wall/roofs for maintenance, and ensure buildings do not obstruct visibility for vehicles exiting driveways to see oncoming traffic and pedestrians. Parking and driveway regulations balance parking desires of residents/tenants with public space in boulevards for snow storage, street trees, on-street parking, and utilities. Some additional rules were created for attached and detached ADUs, as these typically represent intensification of a lot. The regulations work to protect space between buildings, preserve landscape and amenity spaces, and provide basic regulations for parking lots to reduce nuisance and impacts on neighbours, while ensuring safety and functionality such as requiring minimum drive aisle widths for maneuverability.</p> <p>Two areas in particular were highlighted as being challenging to proponents as outlined and described below. In both cases staff is of the opinion that the regulations should not be changed as they are important to safe and functional sites, streets and neighbourhoods.</p> <p><u>1.1 m unobstructed walkway:</u> The purpose of an unobstructed walkway is to provide a well-defined and passable route to the main entrance to each unit. This is particularly important when entrances are not on a street facing façade. Emergency services require this route to accommodate a stretcher and emergency personnel with apparatus. This walkway also provides a clear route for tenants and their visitors to find and access the unit. The walkway requirement is not unique to Kitchener and is a</p>

	<p>standard requirement for ADUs in municipalities across the province. Requests for reduced widths or that introduce walkway encumbrances such as driveway crossings or parking space encroachments require a minor variance to ensure that Fire is satisfied that the situation remains safe, and the approval may be subject to conditions.</p> <p><u>Parking and maximum driveway width:</u> While the City has reduced the parking requirements for ADUs, it is common for property owners to propose more than the minimum number of parking spaces. This is sometimes accompanied by a request that driveways be wider than what is permitted by the by-law. Driveway widths have been carefully calibrated in the zoning by-law based on minimum lot sizes and seek to ensure that there is sufficient space in front yards for landscaping, walkways and infiltration, and in boulevards for municipal infrastructure such as street trees, hydrants, hydro poles and transformers, as well as space for on-street parking between driveway aprons. Widened driveways reduce opportunities for infiltration of storm water, directing more to storm sewers than they were designed for and increase hard surface areas which contributes to the urban heat island effect. There may be circumstances where proposals for variances to for driveway widenings can be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>The Enabling Four Units zoning was designed to permit most lots to meet the <u>minimum</u> parking requirements without requiring special consideration. Parking beyond the minimum requirement may be provided in accordance with driveway and parking lot regulations. Illegal parking and driveway widenings are enforced through by-law enforcement.</p> <p>Staff do not recommend that zoning regulations be amended at this time and rather that minor zoning by-law refinements continue to be considered as part of the Annual Zoning By-law Update. The Annual Zoning By-law review provides an opportunity for refinements, clarifications, and minor adjustments to regulations and definitions as they arise.</p>
<p>Respondents did not anticipate costs associated with constructing ADUs.</p>	<p>Costs associated with developing ADUs were one of the biggest concerns identified by survey respondents and at the Builder Workshop. Development charges (DCs) are frequently cited as a barrier to homeowners and small developers, with some mentioning that DCs can represent more than 10% of a project's costs, and with some projects not proceeding as a result. Staff note that some DCs are exempted for second and third units, however full DCs are required for the fourth unit. This can result in an increased upfront cost to the developer or homeowner.</p> <p>Payments to compensate for the removal of street trees was also mentioned. Street trees and other trees in public ownership provide many benefits to a community. Through the approvals process, all efforts are made by review staff to protect and preserve street trees including solutions such as moving driveways, narrowing driveway aprons, etc. However, in certain circumstances removal of a tree cannot be avoided and in such circumstances the developer is required to provide compensation payments for the tree that is removed.</p>

	<p>Servicing costs were also identified as an unexpected cost. Adding dwelling units to properties may require new service connections or improvements to existing services to increase capacity. These costs are the responsibility of the proponent and are required as part of the construction process.</p> <p>Some applicants have indicated that construction costs are also higher for purpose-built triplexes and fourplexes as the Building Code requires non-combustible construction materials which are more expensive than materials typically used for single or semi-detached houses. This is mitigated by some developers through staging the construction, whereby they build a duplex first, and then renovate the duplex to add a third and/or fourth unit. This approach adds time and complexity to the development as permits and construction are staged. Staff recommends that if a developer plans to stage a development that they confirm that the ultimate development will comply with zoning and other regulations to ensure future compliance.</p> <p>Next Step: Staff is currently preparing and evaluating options for an Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan which will include consideration of financial incentives for ADUs such as grants to assist with Development Charges. A report will be provided later in 2025 on this matter.</p>
<p>Repeatable designs and pre-reviewed plans will assist with streamlining approvals processes</p>	<p>The City of Kitchener is recognized as a Local Partner with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) promoting all 7 of their design plans. These include options for backyard homes, duplexed singles, semi's and townhouses, and fourplexes. A six-plex is also available, however not part of the Enabling Four Units regulations. These options are suitable for use on many lots in Kitchener. While each design will require a zoning compliance review and a site-specific foundation, servicing and grading plans, the designs are pre-reviewed by Building and Planning staff. Homeowners and developers who are interested in building using a CMHC design are encouraged to reach out to Planning and Building staff for more information.</p> <p>Builders interested in pursuing other high-frequency repeated designs should contact the Building Division for more information about Certified Plans.</p> <p>Next Step: The City supports the use of the CMHC Housing Catalogue to help homeowners and builders advance building plan preparation and approvals that will be quicker and with reduced costs compared to starting from scratch.</p>
<p>Becoming a Landlord</p>	<p>About 1/3 of respondents indicated that they were becoming a landlord for the first time. Some indicated that additional support and resources would be helpful. The City has previously committed to creating and promoting educational tools for landlords and establishing a Landlord Tenant Forum through Housing for All 2.0.</p> <p>Next Step:</p>

	As previously committed, that through Housing for All 2.0 educational tools be developed to support landlords and that the City establish a Landlord Tenant Forum.
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What We Heard from Residents

Staff received responses from about 250 members of the general public. About 60% of respondents live near an ADU, and 20% of respondents know someone who lives in an ADU. The majority of respondents provided comments that are specific to detached ADUs (backyard homes) or to both attached and detached ADUs.

Residents indicated that they appreciate how ADUs provide more housing options, support affordability or generate income, allow families to live close together while making good use of existing land, and allow residents to age in place. Some respondents liked certain aspects of ADUs but also mentioned areas of concern.

The majority of residents responding to the online survey expressed one or more concerns with ADUs. The survey did not collect personal or other identifying information that would allow a detailed geographical analysis; however, based on comments, many responses were directed specifically to one detached ADU in a newer suburban neighbourhood. In this instance, residents were surprised and concerned with the size of the detached ADU. Residents identifying themselves as living in this neighbourhood expressed concerns about ADUs being rented as short-term rentals and/or lodging houses, and expressed concerns about student rentals, and associated concerns such as noise and nuisance, property maintenance, illegal parking, etc.

Many also commented that ADUs contribute to perceptions of overcrowding in some new suburban areas, with impacts to the availability of on-street parking, illegally widened driveways, absentee landlords and associated concerns of neglected property maintenance (snow removal, lawn mowing/landscaping, garbage and recycling storage). Residents also expressed concerns with increased noise and nuisance both during construction and because of increased population density.

Respondents indicating that they lived in older neighbourhoods commonly cited concerns about changes to community characteristics that they value such as introduction of new architectural styles and increases to the size and density of dwellings (e.g. up to 4 households rather than just one household on a lot).

Other general themes include:

- perceived loss of privacy both in relation to outdoor private amenity areas and inside dwellings, due to new building being constructed near property lines.
- increased demand on on-site and on-street parking
- impact on property values
- property maintenance concerns.

Concerns by theme	Comments
Overcrowding	Many survey respondents expressed concerns that ADUs were leading to overcrowding in neighbourhoods. ADUs are a gentle form of intensification that seeks to introduce residential units into existing neighbourhoods where there are already schools, services, parks, etc. Concerns were raised that permitting ADUs and more households in existing neighbourhoods causes overcrowding with impacts such as a loss of privacy and green space, increased noise and nuisance, and increased demand on on-street parking.

	<p>Through the Enabling Four Units project staff carefully balanced regulations that permit an increase in density with regulations that provide for compatible built form. Zoning regulations such as lot width, work together with required setbacks, maximum building height, minimum landscape and amenity areas and driveway widths, to ensure that sites are functional and safe. The minimum lot size will allow a homeowner to legally provide the minimum required number of parking spaces, and to meet setback, coverage and other regulations. However, the size of the buildings and placement on the site must be carefully considered to comply and more modestly sized buildings may be required on smaller lots. It is also important to note that regulations may not allow all lots to be developed with up to 4 units, or all configurations of units. Some lots are not large enough for a backyard home, and others may not be suitable for a fourplex with more than the minimum number of parking spaces. Staff note that since the by-law was approved, Planning Act changes prevent a by-law from regulating lot area, floor space ratio for ADUs, or requiring more than 4 metres separation between a backyard home and principal dwelling, therefore, regulations rely on lot width, building coverage, maximum driveway sizes and maximum heights to ensure that lots are not overbuilt.</p>
<p>Demand for parking</p>	<p>Minimum parking requirements for ADUs were established based on where the lot is located and proximity to frequent transit and good cycling options. The intention is to allow a homeowner or developer flexibility to provide dwelling units and not provide more parking than is needed, while allowing more than the minimum number of parking spaces when they can be legally accommodated on the site. Current minimum parking rates continue to be supported by Transportation Services and Planning and must be balanced with other priorities such as space for street trees, landscaping, on-street parking etc.</p> <p>Some developers and homeowners wish to provide more than the minimum number of parking spaces, and this is permitted if a driveway or parking lot complies with by-law requirements. It is responsibility of the property owner or landlord to ensure that they are renting units responsibly and that tenants understand how much parking is included with the lease. Parking and other by-law violations are subject to enforcement measures including tickets and fines.</p> <p>On-street parking is equally available to all members of the public (owners, tenants, visitors, etc.). On-street parking regulations are enforceable under the City of Kitchener Traffic and Parking By-law and the Region of Waterloo Traffic and Parking By-law and is permitted for up to 3 consecutive hours during the day unless there is a sign posted that says otherwise. An overnight parking exemption is required in the winter.</p> <p>Next steps: Continue to monitor on-site parking demands.</p>
<p>Concern that ADUs are built without community</p>	<p>Attached and detached ADUs, including up to 4 dwelling units, are permitted as-of-right by the Zoning By-law. Additional public consultation is not required prior to a building permit being issued for an ADU, unless the proposal does not comply with zoning. Staff encourage homeowners and</p>

<p>consultation or knowledge</p>	<p>builders who are adding ADUs to connect with neighbours prior to starting construction as a neighbourly courtesy.</p> <p>Throughout the Enabling Four Units project in 2024 the City engaged with the public and provided several opportunities for comments and input to be provided at open houses, through an Engage Page, and via social media, print media, and public meetings. Following approval of the regulations staff also promoted the new regulations and permissions to inform the public on what was permitted and to support uptake.</p> <p>Next Step: Continue community outreach in 2026 to promote and support the creation of ADUs and to build knowledge and understanding of ADUs within the community, through the City’s website and social media channels, and targeted outreach including in person at events such as the Home Show, and at community centres or other public venues.</p>
<p>Backyard homes are too large</p>	<p>Several respondents raised concerns that backyard homes are too large and overlook private amenity areas of neighbouring properties. ADUs increase density and introduce new dwelling units on existing lots, which can result in changes in rear yards.</p> <p>Backyard homes are subject to zoning regulations for setbacks and maximum heights. The overall footprint is limited to 80 m² and a maximum 15% lot coverage, limiting the size of the ADU relative to the size of the lot. For example, a 315 m² lot (10.5 m x 30 m) would only permit a 47 m² (500 ft²) backyard home and the principal dwelling would likely be limited to a having a footprint of about 124 m² (1136 ft²). Windows and doors near property lines are regulated by the Building Code, with fewer openings permitted the closer the wall is to the property line.</p> <p>Most backyard homes continue to be one-storey dwellings and are generally not higher than other permitted accessory structures such as detached garages. Such units can be effectively screened with fencing and a neighbour is permitted to erect a 2.4 m (8 ft) fence should they desire, which would effectively block views should they be a concern. Backyard homes can be permitted to have a height up to 6.0 m which would permit a second storey incorporated into a roof, or a raised bungalow, however the required setback is increased, and this is only permitted on lots where the principal dwelling exceeds 9.1 m (about 30 ft which typically represents two full storeys with a peaked roof).</p>
<p>ADUs are changing the character of neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Residents raised concerns that ADUs were changing the character of neighbourhoods by increasing the number of dwellings with rental tenure, increasing diversity in the size of dwelling units, and introducing new architectural styles. The City promotes a broad range and mix of dwelling types and forms of tenure to meet the needs of residents. ADUs provide an opportunity to increase housing supply by gently increasing density within existing neighbourhoods and is one of many housing types that are being added to meet housing demand and unlock housing supply. ADUs are a low-rise and low-density form of housing which is compatible with other low-rise housing types including single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, and townhouse dwellings. Architectural styles change over time in</p>

	<p>response to new building technologies, materials and aesthetic preferences. Neighbourhoods and homes are not static and change and adapt over time to meet the ever-changing needs of residents.</p>
<p>Concerns that ADUs are used for short term and student rental purposes.</p>	<p>ADUs provide additional housing choices for many individuals and households living in the city including families with children, single person households, students, couples, and multi-generational families.</p> <p>ADUs can be rented on a short or long-term basis. Short term rentals provide a valuable housing option for visitors to the city, as well as residents who may need shorter term housing due to work contracts, temporary displacement from another residence, those who are new to the city and seeking a permanent address, and many others. Short term rentals are not regulated within the Zoning By-law framework and Council recently decided not to license or further regulate short term rentals. Short term rental is a permitted tenure in all neighbourhoods and dwelling types including ADUs.</p> <p>Provision of safe and adequate student housing has been a concern of residents in neighbourhoods near college and university campuses, with particular focus on the pressure caused by unprecedentedly high levels of international student enrollment over the past 2-3 years. Recent changes to immigration policy have significantly decreased the number of international students living in Kitchener. Staff expect that this will reduce pressure on rental housing including ADUs, decreasing instances of overcrowding within individual units.</p>
<p>Impacts to property value</p>	<p>A number of respondents commented that they fear ADUs will impact property values. For tax purposes property value is established by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and is dependant on many factors including the size of the dwelling, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, etc. The assessed value can differ substantially from market value which is highly dependent on market conditions and preferences of purchasers. Property value is not a land use planning consideration.</p>
<p>Property standards, maintenance concerns, and nuisance</p>	<p>Several respondents indicated that they have concerns that properties with ADUs were not well maintained (garbage not stored properly, grass not mown, snow not shoveled, etc.), that vehicles were parking illegally, and that units generate excessive noise. Zoning regulations do not control behaviour, and such issues can arise from any type of housing. The City has a Property Standards By-law, Noise By-law and Parking By-law which are enforced by By-law Enforcement staff. Residents are encouraged to reach out to the City if they have concerns about bylaw infractions and staff can follow-up with property owner and tenants who do not comply with regulations.</p>

What We Heard from City Divisions:

Development of ADUs includes review and approvals from many different areas of the City include Planning, Building, Forestry, Utilities, Engineering, Transportation, By-law Enforcement and Fire. Staff solicited internal feedback in researching this report and regularly monitor and discuss questions and concerns as they arise with respect to regulations and processes relating to ADUs. These discussions have resulted in adjustments to processes and refinements to regulations and requirements. For example:

- consideration has been given to permit minor encroachments of downspouts and utility meters into required walkways
- there has been further coordination among teams to ensure consistent approaches to zoning regulations relative to driveways and walkways
- definitions have been updated to clarify how grade and ground floor are calculated to allow more livable basement units, without changing maximum height regulations.
- Kitchener Utilities has initiated a review of multi-metering requirements due to the increase in issues.

Staff will continue to monitor processes and regulations related to ADUs and will make adjustments and improvements as warranted.

Conclusions

Building permit data indicates an increase in the number of lots with ADUs, including triplexes, fourplexes, and backyard homes, since enactment of zoning regulations, as well as a reduction in the number of overall projects requiring minor variances. Overall, staff is of the opinion that ADUs are a positive and meaningful contributor to the overall housing supply in Kitchener. Staff will implement the next steps outlined in this report to respond to concerns identified by the public. Future updates of the number of Building Permits issued for ADUs will be provided as part of the Annual Housing Monitoring Report.

The following next steps are identified in this report and have been incorporated into existing workplans:

- Build knowledge and understanding of ADUs within the community, through the City's website and social media channels, and targeted outreach including in person at events such as the Home Show, and at community centres or other public venues.
- Monitor on-site parking demands.
- Develop educational tools to support landlords and establish a Landlord Tenant Forum. (as future actions of Housing for All 2.0).
- Consider financial incentives for ADUs through the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan.
- Support use of the CMHC Housing Design Catalogue.
- Promote the 'Guide to Additional Dwelling Units'.
- Develop a 'pre-submission' process for Planning and Building staff to provide early feedback on ADU projects.
- Add the Zoning (Occupancy) Certificate applications to the public portal in 2026.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – A feedback survey was launched in July 2025 on EngageKitchener to obtain input from property owners and builders who have constructed additional dwelling units, tenants of additional dwelling units and residents living in neighbourhood where additional dwelling units have been added. Staff received 288 responses to the survey which are summarized in the What We Heard Section of this report. A Builder’s Workshop was held August 27, 2025 to obtain input on an Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan. Staff gained insight into financial barriers to ADU development through this workshop.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [DSD-2024-066 – Enabling Four Units](#)

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Newly Created Four Unit Dwellings and Two Unit Backyard Homes

Attachment B – Kitchener Additional Dwelling Units Permits Issued – Map A and Map B