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DC homeowners get help to build accessory apartments on their lots

CSG joins with UPO to release *ADU DC Homeowner's Manual: How to Build an Accessory Apartment or Second Dwelling in the District of Columbia*

The United Planning Organization (UPO) and Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG) have just released [ADU DC Homeowner's Manual: How to Build an Accessory Apartment or Second Dwelling in the District of Columbia](#), to give homeowners the guidance they need to create an accessory or second dwelling unit on their property. The new guide will make it easier for homeowners to add income-producing units to their homes.

"This manual is a how-to guide for DC homeowners to navigate the process of building an ADU," said Cheryl Cort, CSG and lead author of the UPO/CSG publication. A survey of homeowners conducted by CSG indicated that navigating the process was a major concern to initiating an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) project.

A popular trend in the U.S. is to create backyard cottages and basement apartments to provide additional income or additional living space for family members. In late 2016, DC changed its zoning regulations, allowing single family homeowners to build an ADU on their lot as a matter of right. However, the task of building a new living unit can seem daunting, even though many homeowners have expressed interest in doing so.

"We created this manual to reach low and moderate income homeowners who could benefit from the wealth-building opportunity of having a rental unit on their property. UPO is leading the effort to reach these homeowners, while also working to make the ADU rentals affordable for lower income households," said Kay Pierson, UPO.

UPO launched the ADU DC initiative in 2019, which was made possible with the support of founding funder Citi.

"These times call for innovative ways to generate income and to accommodate family members who need housing," said Pierson.

The manual is designed to assist both homeowners and professionals, including architects and contractors. It covers project planning, zoning, design options, cost considerations, financing, permitting, hiring professionals and managing the rental unit. The how-to guide comes as the District's permitting agency, DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), has made great strides in streamlining the process for one- and two-unit development projects.

"Homeowners should know it's getting easier. The District's new Residential Center, led by Mike Brown at DCRA, has made tremendous progress in easing the permit review process. With the UPO/CSG manual and DCRA's streamlining, homeowners have a lot more support for an ADU project," said Cort.

Download the UPO/CSG manual [here](#).