



Policies for Housing Affordability in VA

How ADUs, Housing Near Jobs, and YIGBY Can Unleash Housing in the Commonwealth



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs)

ADUs are secondary units on lots that have a principal dwelling unit. ADUs offer a variety of benefits, both for housing affordability and for households with specific lifestyle preferences. ADUs provide a potential source of income for the homeowners who build them while they also generally rent for less than apartments in the same neighborhood. ADUs allow for intergenerational living. They are often housing for seniors at their adult children's homes, sometimes providing an opportunity for grandparents to care for their grandchildren.

3 Rules for ADU Legislation

There are three common pitfalls that hurt ADU laws. (1) Owner occupancy requirements can discourage homeowners from building them because if they decide to move, they will may not be able to profit from their investment. (2) Parking requirements can make it impossible to build ADUs in areas with limited space. (3) Requiring a public hearing to receive an ADU permit can turn off homeowners.



BENEFITS OF ALLOWING HOUSING NEAR JOBS

Legalizing multifamily construction in commercial zones creates the opportunity for apartments to be built at sites that no longer make sense in their current use, such as dead malls or low-value commercial buildings with large parking spots that sit in prime locations. Beyond increasing housing supply and affordability, this type of reform can allow people to live near work. It can create opportunities to live where they can walk to patronize local businesses. It can also make more retail viable by increasing the number of people who live in mixed-use neighborhoods.

Constructing a Strong Bill

A Housing Near Jobs bill should define a base of development rights that applies to most properties statewide zoned to allow offices or retail. The base rights should facilitate 3-story townhouses and apartments with low requirements for parking. In addition, context-based rules that depend on the site and the neighborhood's built character can expand those rights. Finally, local planning can exempt some commercial zones that are ill-suited to housing.



WHY YIGBY IS IMPORTANT

In Bryan, OH one pastor sought to fulfill his church's charitable mission by operating a shelter for homeless people in the church. However, Bryan officials shut down the shelter for violating the local zoning code. Yes In God's Backyard (YIGBY) laws can prevent this sort of situation by enabling religious institutions to help their communities through using their property for housing. Where YIGBY is allowed, housing on faith-owned land is often highly affordable because religious institutions typically offer the housing at discounted rates or even for free. Some of these religious institutions go even further to help families who are living on their property by offering daycare for children. This primarily benefits lower income citizens who are struggling to afford housing.

Constructing a Strong Bill

A YIGBY bill should define a base of development rights that applies to almost any property owned by a religious or charitable nonprofit organization statewide. The base rights should facilitate 3-story townhouses and apartments with low requirements for parking. In addition, context-based rules that depend on the site and the neighborhood's built character can expand those rights. Finally, a YIGBY bill should legalize supportive housing and group homes.