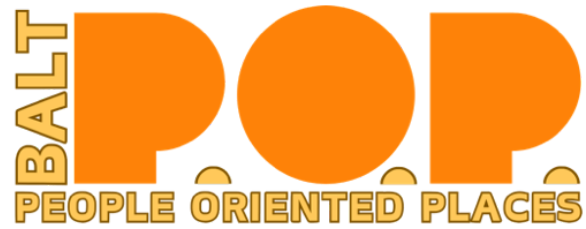


Bill: HB1538

Bill Title: Land Use - Accessory Dwelling Units - Requirements and Prohibitions (Maryland Generational Housing Act of 2026)

Position: **Favorable**



Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

As a group which believes that encouraging traditional, higher-density development patterns in Maryland will deliver us appealing, affordable, fiscally-sustainable communities, we support HB1538.

Housing affordability has gradually and all at once become a top concern for Marylanders. [1] Younger residents/voters, in particular, are overwhelmingly feeling the effects of this in an acute way, with 75% of **all** Marylanders agreeing that there is too little housing for them. [2]

One of the principal reasons for this is that we are not allowing enough housing to be built, period. However, the dearth of housing is to be found most acutely at the smaller, cheaper end of the housing spectrum. Relatively affordable starter housing isn't being built here. This bill would be one step toward rectifying that.

Maryland is stronger when all of its communities include a wide range of housing options - of varying sizes, price points, ages, formats, and ownership options. Adding a diversity of housing options to our communities, especially this largely absent smaller, more affordable housing, means they can accommodate people as they move through different life stages and their housing needs change.

Allowing and encouraging accessory apartments and backyard cottages (AKA Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs) in Maryland will be one of the best (if not the best) tools for improving housing affordability in the state. They are a crucial step toward a gradual, broad-based densification of the low-density suburbs that dominate our residential communities. That increased density will be a sign of the housing abundance (of smaller starter housing) we need. And that gradual trajectory will allow the state's municipalities to comfortably plan for any needed infrastructure investments.

The housing resulting from this bill will be more likely to seamlessly fit into the character of existing neighborhoods, more so than large multi-family buildings with imposing massing and sudden and daunting infrastructure demands - which are so often the target of blistering community opposition.

Some would have you believe that allowing for ADUs opens the door for slum landlords/developers to acquire cheap property onto which they can cram low-quality housing units, leading to community decline. It's hard to understand the facts on which these predictions are based, as ADUs are largely absent from Maryland, specifically, and the American landscape, in general. We don't believe such case studies of decline exist. What does exist, though, is Vancouver.

Over the course of the past few years, Vancouver, BC has been ranked the fifth most liveable city in the world and the third best city in the world for quality of living. [3] [4] Another little-known fact is that, in Vancouver, fully **one-third of single-family houses have legal ADUs**. [5] Starting in the late 1980s, Vancouver legalized thousands of existing, but illegal, ADUs. It then proceeded to eliminate the most counterproductive barriers preventing the development of new ADUs. The result has not been decline, but rather a thriving, world-class city - with ADUs all over.

We need to move away from the never-ending battle of neighbors vs. developers and, instead, position neighbors **as** developers. ADUs serve as an approachable, flexible, grass-roots, affordable housing option that Maryland needs more of.

We expect that a prime concern that people will have with this bill is that it will exacerbate parking contention. Please realize that when we choose to not build housing because of sensitivity over parking, what we are saying is that we are more sensitive to the pain of trying to find a place to park than we are sensitive to the pain of trying to find a place to live.

We would have preferred to see Maryland's counties make these reforms themselves, but they have not. And there isn't any reason to believe that they will do so anytime soon. As such, we believe that the bold actions called for in this bill are warranted.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of HB1538**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)

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