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**Subject:** New Housing law

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**Subject:** New Housing law

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WHILE SCOTTSDALE LOOKS FOR WAYS TO BREAK THE NEW HOUSIN LAW,  
MESA IS EMBRACING IT!

## **Mesa to change its rules on casitas. What to expect in addition to bigger units**



**Maritza Dominguez**

Arizona Republic

Mesa residents looking to add casitas in their backyard could soon make them bigger after the City Council introduced new rules on Monday.

Updates to statewide legislation and city code on accessory dwelling units or more commonly called “casitas” have been touted as a way to combat the Valley's affordable housing crisis.

Gov. Katie Hobbs [signed House Bill 2720](#) in May, establishing statewide standards for ADUs and forcing cities with a population larger than 75,000 to adopt regulations related to casitas.

Mesa has allowed accessory dwelling units since the 1930s but the new updates will better align with new state standards.

A final vote on the proposed ordinance will come in October. If approved, it would go into effect 30 days later.

The city code changes will allow more than one ADU on a residential property.

**Casitas in Phoenix:** [Phoenix just legalized guesthouses citywide to combat affordable housing crisis](#)

With the changes, a resident can build one attached and one detached ADU on his or her property. If it is more than one acre, a third ADU could be built, as long as it's reserved for an affordable housing unit.

The city will require a resident to file a covenant in a deed to memorialize that the casita is reserved for renters earning 80% of the median wage. Failing that, they must enter into a development agreement with the city. Staff won't regulate the policy required by the state. Rather, it will count on people following an “honor system,” said Mary Kopaskie Brown, the city's planning director.

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"Unless we had some kind of complaint, we probably wouldn't go out and investigate that," she said.

Although the city has allowed ADUs for decades, the biggest change is the allowed size of casitas. Before, the size was capped at 30% of the primary building. Now that is increasing to 75%, up to 1,000 square feet.

The state requirements prevent cities from forcing parking restrictions on casitas.



Mesa's proposed changes will simplify additional requirements on height and setbacks. Kopaskie Brown said residents who live in homeowner associations will need to look at their community bylaws before building casitas. Those HOA bylaws supersede city code, she said.

Councilmember Francisco Heredia, who represents far west Mesa, is a big supporter of the changes. He's been pushing for the city to find a way to make casitas more accessible and to help streamline the process of getting permits.

He said his constituents could particularly benefit from the proposed changes because many live in multi-generational households.

The district is largely made up of a minority population with 33% being Latino, according to data from the Maricopa Association of Governments.

"I think that changes maybe incentivize more people to look at this option and having ADUs in Mesa," he said.

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### **Room for improvement**

Heredia told The Arizona Republic the changes are “a good start for (the city) for us to keep on evolving on this issue around housing.”

He and other council members are urging staff to also look at ways to have “preset concepts” or blueprints for residents that want to build casitas.

Right now, residents need to hire an architect to draw up the plans but if the city could provide a range of pre-approved blueprints, it could help streamline the process, he said. City staff said that’s a discussion they will come back to the council on in the future.

The popularity of pre-manufactured shipping container-type homes are on the rise but right now city code does not allow them to be used as ADUs.

During a presentation at a city council meeting, several members urged the staff to revisit the regulations on pre-fabricated homes to find a way to allow them as ADUs.

“I think it's always important to relook at these things and how we can improve upon.

And so definitely the staff has put together, it's an evolution of how we can become better and offer options for our residents to do these things,” Heredia said.