

The rules for allowing ‘granny flats’ in West Covina could change

[Christopher Yee](#) August 29, 2018 at 10:33 pm



A Grove crane with a 197-foot boom lowers the first section of a Fleetwood manufactured home into place in Nicola and Melinda Angiuli’s backyard on Wednesday, July 18, 2018. In 2017, California municipalities issued 4,352 ADU permits, up 63 percent from 2016, data firms Buildfax and Attom Data Solutions reported. In Los Angeles and Orange counties, permits jumped 127 percent. (Photo by Jeff Gritchen, Orange County Register/SCNG)

The West Covina Planning Commission will consider changing the rules for granny flats in the city at its next meeting.

On Tuesday, the commission discussed potential changes to requirements for the minimum lot size required for a property owner to build an “accessory dwelling unit,” more commonly known as granny flats. They’re often considered a [quick, short-term fix to Southern California’s affordable housing](#)

[crisis.](#)

Commissioners also Tuesday discussed how much buffer space, or setback, should be between the property line and the guesthouse, and its maximum size.

However, with commission Chair Jose Jimenez absent from the meeting, the remaining commissioners were divided about whether or not the changes were necessary.

Commissioners Dario Castellanos and Sheena Heng said they were in favor of removing the lot size requirement of 12,000 square feet, decreasing the minimum rear setback from 25 feet to 5 feet and allowing units as large as 1,200 square feet, the maximum allowed by state law, from the current city standard of 800 square feet.

Resident Jamie Lee said, as written, the first two requirements significantly limit how many properties could build an accessory dwelling unit — only 25 percent of residential properties in West Covina are at least 12,000 square feet, according to a city staff report — and the third requirement unnecessarily limits the amount homeowners can increase their property values.

“For people to support these rules, you have to have rationale or principles behind them,” Lee said at Tuesday’s commission meeting, advocating for the changes.

Commissioners Donald Holtz and Herb Redholtz said they were in favor of maintaining the city standards as they are now.

Without a fifth, deciding vote, the commission opted to delay its decision until its Sept. 11 meeting.

Earlier this year, [Pasadena took steps to encourage more granny flats](#) in the city by lowering the permit fees — as long as the unit is marked for affordable

housing. Last year, [Alhambra passed an ordinance allowing guesthouses.](#)