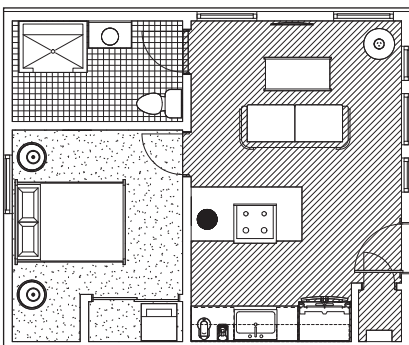




Housing Design Competition Tool Kit

How to encourage local leaders, community members, students and building professionals to get creative about expanding housing choices for older adults and people of all ages



By **AARP** with the **RL Mace Universal Design Institute**



AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to the more than 100 million Americans 50-plus and their families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

Address: AARP, 601 E Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20049 | **Website:** *AARP.org*
Toll-Free English: 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277) | **Toll-Free Spanish:** 1-877-342-2277 | **International:** +1-202-434-3525
TTY User Dial 711 English: 1-877-434-7598 | **TTY User Dial 711 Spanish:** 1-866-238-9488
X: @AARP | **Facebook:** /AARP

AARP Livable Communities

The AARP Livable Communities initiative supports the efforts of local leaders and residents throughout the nation to make their communities more livable and age-friendly.

Website: *AARP.org/Livable* | **Newsletter:** *AARP.org/LivableSubscribe* | **Email:** *Livable@AARP.org*
X: @AARPLivable | **Facebook:** /AARPLivableCommunities



The RL Mace Universal Design Institute is named for Ronald L. Mace, an architect, product designer and educator who coined the term “universal design” to describe the concept of designing products and the built environment to serve the needs of people regardless of their age, ability or status in life. Based in North Carolina, the institute is a nonprofit organization that advances the concept of universal design in all design disciplines, including housing, public-use buildings, outdoor and urban environments, and related products. The institute’s sister initiative, the Better Living Design Institute, seeks to change the way homes are designed, built and remodeled so they better meet the needs of everyone at every life stage.

Websites: *UDInstitute.org* | *BetterLivingDesign.org*

Cover images (from top row, left to right):

Design by Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture in partnership with Assistology, LLC, An ADU for U Design Competition (2023), City of Omaha, Nebraska
Design by Ross Miller, An ADU for U Design Competition (2023), City of Omaha, Nebraska
Design by Reservoir Studio Architecture, PLLC, An ADU for U Design Competition (2023), City of Raleigh, North Carolina
Design by Alexander Booth, The Homes to Opportunity (H2O) Accessory Dwelling Unit Design Contest (2023) Suffolk County, New York
Design by Kenneth Riggs, ADU Design Competition (2018), University of Kentucky College of Design
Design by Haley Kellam, Dwell Design Studio, ADU Design Competition (2023), City of Roanoke, Virginia

Copyright © 2024 by AARP | AARP is a registered trademark. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of AARP, except for brief quotations in connection with reviews written specifically for inclusion in print or digital publications or platforms, or limited excerpts strictly for personal use.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While AARP has used its best efforts in preparing this publication, it makes no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents, examples, instructions and/or guidance contained herein. The advice and strategies discussed may not be suitable for each reader’s or community’s situation. Consultation with local professionals is advised, and compliance with local regulations is required. AARP shall not be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential or other types, nor for any injuries to persons or property.

AARP Housing Design Competition Tool Kit

INTRODUCTION

One way local leaders, academic institutions, housing advocates and building professionals can encourage the creation of the housing we need is by hosting a housing design competition.

Produced by AARP Livable Communities with the RL Mace Universal Design Institute, the **AARP Housing Design Competition Tool Kit** explains how a design contest can be a stepping stone for developing housing that’s both needed and suitable for people of all ages.

AARP helps in such efforts through its State Offices and the AARP Community Challenge, which funds local improvement projects, including ones that address the housing needs of older adults. (See page 13 for more about our annual “quick-action” grant program.)

In fact, most of the images in this publication come from AARP-assisted design competitions. The ideas that emerged are attractive and smartly sized, and because the homes feature “universal design” principles (see page 4), they are age- and ability-friendly.

With planning and the right partnerships, the winning results can even be turned into preapproved construction documents for use by home and property owners, small design-build businesses, real estate developers and local governments. ■

The goal of the AARP-supported housing design competitions: educate residents, business stakeholders and local leaders about the need for — and the economic viability of — smaller homes and age-friendly design.



▲ These age-friendly homes were design competition entries. Ranging in size from 530-square-feet (top) to roughly 650-square-feet, each contains one-bedroom and one-bath.

By almost any measure, the United States has an insufficient supply of housing and housing options.

- Millions of people are living in homes that are too small or too large for themselves or their families.
- In too many places, housing choices are limited to small apartments or oversized single-family houses.
- Older adults and people with mobility challenges are residing in homes with stairs, when they really need a single-story floor plan.

Added to all that, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts people age 65-plus will outnumber children by 2034.

IMAGES: TRIMENSION DESIGN, ADU AWARENESS AND ACCESSIBILITY CAMPAIGN (2023), CITY OF LAKE CITY, MINNESOTA | BSIDE HOMES, AN ADU FOR U DESIGN COMPETITION (2023), RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Housing Design Competitions and Age-Friendly Housing

Although the ultimate goal of a housing design contest is for the winning designs to be built, the pursuit itself has benefits. Here are three:

1. Housing design competitions educate communities and raise awareness
Housing comes in many shapes, sizes and types, ranging from high-rise apartment buildings to single-family houses, and everything in between.

There is value to introducing a community to the great expanse of housing options, including accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, and the suite of housing styles that fit within the framework of Missing Middle Housing. (Both concepts are described on page 5.)

Competitions can also advance awareness about universal design, or UD. Desirable UD housing features enable a home to be suitable for older adults — as well as people of all ages and life stages. (See page 4.)

2. Housing design competitions can inspire needed policy change

Greater awareness about housing options by local leaders and community members can inspire changes, such as zoning code updates, which might be needed in order to build certain housing types.

A competition focused on accessory dwelling units can advance rules permitting ADUs.

A competition for Missing Middle-type designs can be a tangible way of showing local stakeholders that a residence with two, three or even four apartments can be indistinguishable in appearance, height and footprint from a neighboring single-family house.

Housing-choice-supportive legislation and policies can adjust the impediments — including density ratios, parking minimums, utility hookups and property-line setbacks — that can get in the way of building needed and more-varied housing.

3. Housing design competitions can help communities create the housing we need
Depending upon the local zoning and the amount of marketing that accompanies (and continues beyond) the design competition, a successful program can increase the number of ADU and Missing Middle-style housing applications submitted to a permit office.

In fact, most of the towns, cities and counties mentioned in this guide have preapproved their local contest’s winning designs. Such a fast-track process reduces the costs and steps involved in acquiring a building permit and, ultimately, creating a new or remodeled home.

Some local governments purchase the plans and construction documents outright and make them free to the community. Others display the designs on their website but direct anyone seeking plans to the architect or design firm.

Know that the design competition needn’t require that contestants create construction documents. Most applications require only annotated development drawings, a site plan, floor plans, elevations and renderings. If the proposed housing designs find a receptive audience, construction documents can be commissioned at a later date.

The immediate result of a housing design competition might be an exhibition or else a website or booklet that showcases the entries.

The presentation of ideas and designs can inform community members about what an ADU is and the benefits of having one.

A developer or builder might be inspired to create a Missing Middle-style residence or several. ■

► The City of Louisville, Kentucky, used a grant from the 2023 AARP Community Challenge to host an ADU design competition, purchase the winning ADU plans and then make them available to the public for free. Because the plans are preapproved, they generally comply with the local zoning and building code requirements. Among the available plans is this 450-square-foot (15' x 30'), one-bath ADU that can accommodate two bedrooms. The design includes a variety of roof types, windows and porches.



◄ In 2021, the City of Tucson, Arizona, amended its local codes to allow ADUs. In 2023, an AARP Community Challenge grant helped the city host the Casita Model Plan Design Competition. “Casita” means cottage in Spanish. Working with the American Institute of Architects Southern Arizona, the contest sought creative solutions for affordable, accessible housing. More than 63 designs were submitted, with each scored by a jury of community members representing a range of expertise. The public was invited to participate in some of the voting — and more than 1,400 people did in a three-week window. The one-bedroom, one-bath, 800-square-foot home shown here is among the 10 winning entries included in the city’s Casita Model Plan Library of preapproved plans.

► In 2015, AARP and AARP Foundation, along with Wells Fargo Foundation and Home Matters, announced a universal design competition in partnership with the Home Depot Foundation. The challenge to the nation’s architects: Transform an outdated, 1960s ranch house in Memphis, Tennessee, into a home that could safely accommodate the changing needs of a family so the owners would be able to stay (and age) in place. The renovation budget: \$75,000. Despite its single-level layout, the house posed several obstacles, including multiple steps, tight doorways and out-of-reach amenities. The winning entry (its floor plan is at right) eliminated all steps to the porch and into the house; reportioned the bathrooms, hallways and doorways; and incorporated multiheight counter tops in the kitchen and main bath.

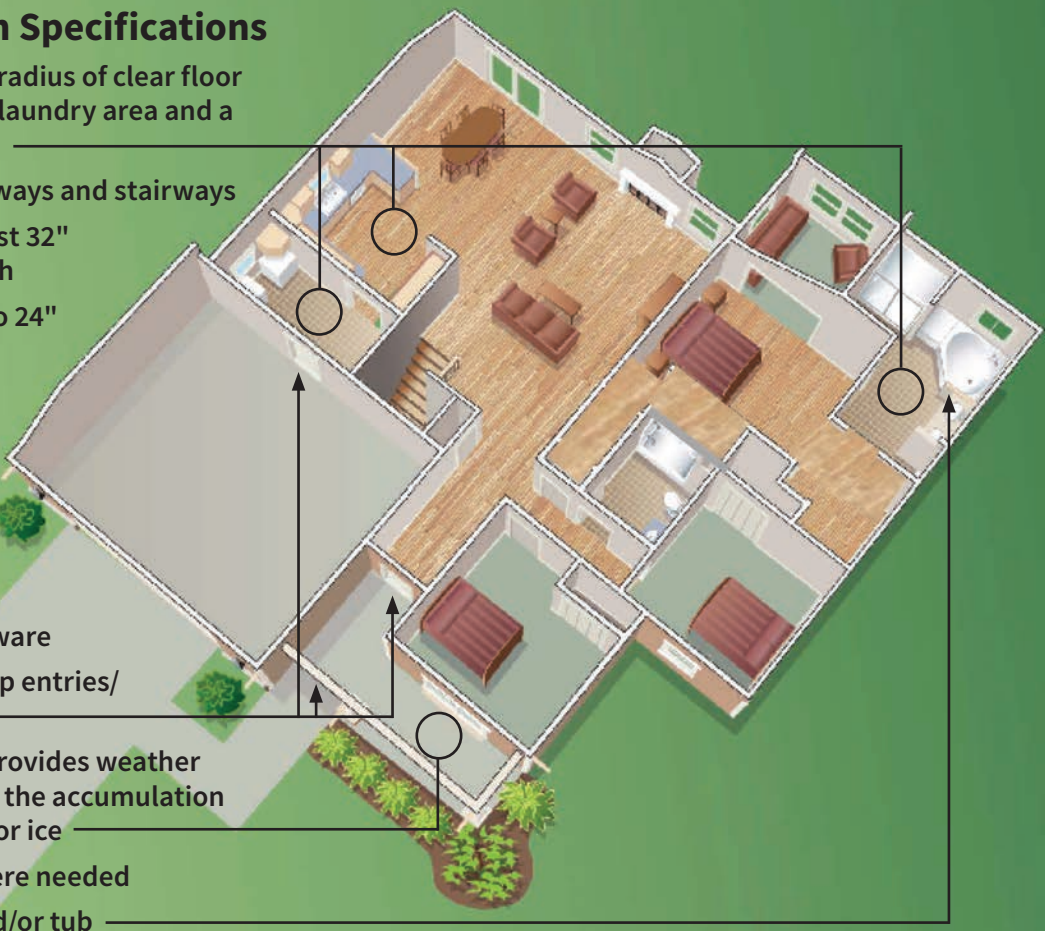


Universal Design and Age-Friendly, Explained

Designing for all means accessibility is included from the start rather than as a costly, time-consuming future modification

Universal Design Specifications

- An adequate turning radius of clear floor space in the kitchen, laundry area and a main-floor bathroom
- 42"- to 48"-wide hallways and stairways
- Doorways with at least 32" of clear opening width
- Outlets located 18" to 24" above the floor
- Rocker-style light switches
- Double handrails on staircases
- Lever-style door handles
- D-style cabinet hardware
- One or more zero-step entries/exits
- A covered entrance provides weather protection and limits the accumulation of water, mud, snow or ice
- Assist bars if and where needed
- Zero-step shower and/or tub



Universal design, or UD, is a design framework that recognizes the diversity of (in engineering lingo) “human performance characteristics,” so spaces can be used by a range of individuals, regardless of age or ability.

An impediment to the broad adoption of UD features in housing has been the lack of understanding about what UD is — and isn’t.

Many consumers, even older adults, see custom accessibility features (e.g., ramps, assist or grab bars) as unappealing. But a home aligned with UD principles avoids pricey,

specialized, often unattractive modifications by using designs, building techniques and fixtures that are stylish, functional, flexible and attainable.

Keep in mind:

A universally designed, age-friendly home is not the same as one that’s outfitted with specialty equipment (such as a motorized lift) for unique medical or mobility needs.

For a home to be marketable to an array of buyers or renters, it has to appeal to people who don’t have a need or any interest in an age-friendly home.

With universal design, spaces and features are useful and stylish. Without being told, few would see the home and think it had been designed based on a resident’s age or disability.

Housing that is attractively designed for people of all ages and abilities is useful for, well, people of all ages and abilities.

A housing design competition can help dispel the stereotypes about age-friendly housing. Over time, that can lead to the availability of more UD-inspired new and remodeled homes of different sizes and a variety of price points. ■

IMAGE: HEARTLAND BUILDERS, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, WITH ADAPTATIONS BY AARP; USED WITH PERMISSION

Accessory Dwelling Units (or ADUs), Defined

An ADU is a small, secondary residence that shares a single-family lot with a larger, primary dwelling. Although many people have never heard the term, accessory dwelling units have been around for centuries and are identified by a number of names, among them: backyard bungalow, garage apartment, granny flat, in-law suite, casita.

Some ADUs are built to provide a home for a family member or caregiver. Some are created to generate rental income, either from the ADU or the larger house.

An ADU typically cannot be sold separately from the primary dwelling.

- As an independent living space, an ADU is self-contained, with its own kitchen or kitchenette, bathroom and sleeping area.
- ADUs can be found in cities, in suburbs and in rural areas, yet are often invisible from view because they’re positioned behind or are indistinct from the primary residence.
- For homeowners looking to downsize, moving into an ADU on their own property might be a more appealing option than relocating to an apartment or, if they're older, an age-restricted community.
- An ADU can be located within, attached to or detached from the main home.
- An ADU can be converted from an existing structure (such as a garage) or built anew.
- Unlike tiny houses, ADUs are compact but not teeny, so they’re a more practical option for individuals, couples and families seeking small, affordable housing.

Find articles and several free publications about ADUs by visiting [AARP.org/ADUs](https://www.aarp.org/ADUs). ■

AARP

The ABCs of ADUs

A guide to
Accessory Dwelling Units
and how they expand housing options
for people of all ages



[AARP.org/ADUs](https://www.aarp.org/ADUs)

▲ The ABCs of ADUs is a free, information- and image-filled introductory guide about accessory dwelling units.

Missing Middle Housing, Defined

There’s a mismatch between the nation’s housing stock and what the market wants and needs. In many communities, the disconnect results from a lack of residential options in the middle of the continuum between detached single-family houses and large apartment buildings.

So-called Missing Middle Housing (also known as Middle Housing) is a critical part of the solution.

Such midsized, often moderately priced homes in walkable neighborhoods are largely “missing” because very few have been built in the United States

since the early 1940s. The housing types include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottage and courtyard homes, and more.

The shortage is largely due to zoning constraints, the shift to car-centric patterns of development and the challenges of financing multiunit dwellings.

Because Missing Middle-style residences are house-scale, the design and size of the buildings fit comfortably among detached single-family houses.

Learn more at [AARP.org/MissingMiddleHousing](https://www.aarp.org/MissingMiddleHousing). ■

AARP

Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing



[AARP.org/MissingMiddleHousing](https://www.aarp.org/MissingMiddleHousing)

▲ Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing is a free guide by AARP and Opticos Design (led by Daniel Parolek, the architect who coined the term “Missing Middle Housing”).

The Step-by-Step

A competition has many tasks — here’s some of what’s involved

Before digging into the details, someone or something — be it an individual, a small group, or a larger organization or local government agency — must get the ball rolling by proposing a housing design competition and taking the initial lead. Once the competition is given a full or at least a tentative green light, the following framework is a useful way to get started.

Step 1: Define the Goals

Get started by answering the question “What’s the point of hosting a housing design competition?” Possible responses:

- To raise awareness about housing options
- To demonstrate ways to provide housing options
- To identify needed zoning code changes
- To educate local leaders, the housing industry, and the public about UD and age-friendly design
- To develop preapproved design and construction plans
- All of the above

The goals can be fine-tuned over time, and they can be tiered according to what is achievable in the short, medium and long term.

Step 2: Build a Core Team

Core team members are responsible for completing tangible tasks, serving as liaisons, facilitating outreach efforts and, ultimately, project managing the competition from beginning to end.

Depending on the goals, funding and available resources, think about which community members and what kind of expertise will be needed to define, pursue and achieve the desired results.

The composition of the core team will be impacted by the commitment required, the schedule, the housing-style and other factors. The core team will represent key, but not necessarily all, constituency stakeholders.

Potential team members can include:

- Local elected leaders and municipal officials, such as planning commissioners, community development staff and housing professionals

Sample Scoring Criteria

Let’s assume that the competition’s goal is to promote age-friendly housing featuring universal design. The scoring could be structured as follows:

CATEGORIES

- **Universal Design** (50 percent of the score)
The home can meet the needs of a variety of residents, is adaptable and will be suitable for safely aging in place.
- **Construction** (20 percent)
This category can be useful for promoting sustainable, cost-efficient and/or innovative building practices.
- **Context** (20 percent)
Designs can earn points for being buildable on a variety of lot types; being compatible with existing structures; and/or being oriented to provide both privacy and natural light.
- **Presentation** (10 percent)
The application package is organized, visually appealing, well-written, and the images and concepts can be understood by design-build professionals as well as community members.

RATINGS AND POINTS

- **Exceeds expectations:** 8 – 10 points
- **Meets expectations:** 5 – 7 points
- **Meets some expectations:** 2 – 4 points
- **Meets a few or no expectations:** 0 – 1 point

- People who work for area agencies on aging and senior service programs
- Members of professional associations, including local chapters of the American Institute of Architects, National Association of Home Builders and American Planning Association
- Home builders and developers from both the private and nonprofit sectors
- Liaisons from financial and business organizations
- Representatives from local advocacy, service and nonprofit groups
- College and high school educators and students from design and construction programs
- Other stakeholders as needed to provide expertise or work on specific tasks and committees

A housing design competition will require a multimonth commitment from core team members. A contest might be implemented by an agency or nonprofit. People might volunteer or receive a small honorarium. If someone is unable to serve on the core team or too many people want to be involved, perhaps they can participate as a judge. (See Step 5.)

Step 3: Write the Rules

- Determine who can compete: Design and building professionals? Students? Anyone?
- Select the competition’s targeted housing style or specialty (e.g., ADUs, small single-family homes).

- Establish the design parameters and requirements for the square footage, unit or room types, features, building materials, and more.
- Provide the local (or aspirational) zoning and construction requirements related to lot size, setbacks, density, parking and engineering.

Step 4: Structure the Judging

The judges, sometimes called jurors, will need information about their responsibilities and guidance for how to compare, contrast and score the submissions.

Judging-related questions for the core team include:

- Will the judges review and score the submissions individually, in small teams or as a group?
- Will the judges select the winners or simply cull the applicant pool and forward a list of finalists to the core team for selecting the winner or winners?

The core team will need to:

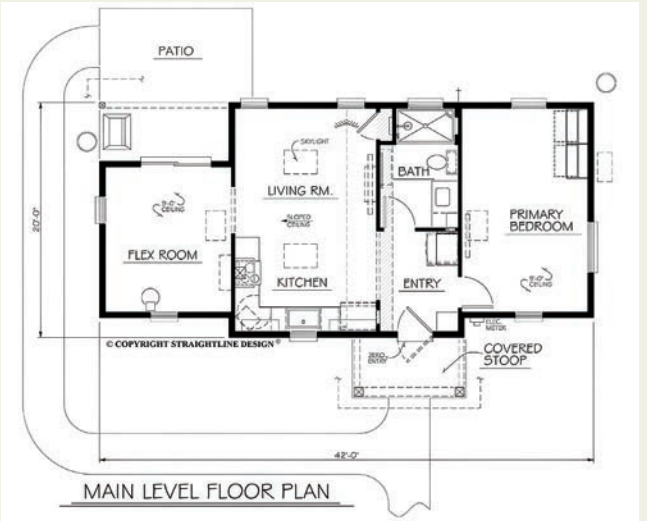
- Determine the judging categories and scoring math
- Create a scoring sheet so the judges can record their views and ratings for each entry and calculate a tally
- Decide whether identifying details about the applicants will be available to the judges or hidden until after the scoring and selection
- Collect the application packages and organize the submitted materials and judging assignments

Continued ►

An Inspiring Example



► AARP Nebraska partnered with the City of Omaha in 2023 to host a design competition called An ADU for U. Plans for the winning entries were eligible for the city’s fast-track building permit program. Among the selectees is this 750-square-foot, one-bedroom, one-bath ADU.



Step 5: Invite People to Be Judges

Before selecting 5 to 10 people to serve as judges (sometimes referred to as jurors), the core team should:

- Determine the qualifications (e.g., expertise credentials, community involvement)
- Draft a list of potential judges
- Agree upon whom to invite
- Prepare and provide introductory materials about the competition and the duties of the judges
- Decide whether the judges will be compensated and, if so, how

Step 6: Create the Application

Map out an application process and select a submission platform. (See the next page.)

Applicants can be asked to:

- Complete an application form listing their name, affiliation and contact information.
- Provide a brief statement about how their design fulfills the goals of the competition.
- Create scale drawings of floor plans and interior and exterior elevations with key features labeled and, if needed, explanations in an accompanying list.
- Indicate the square footage of the living spaces and the structure’s overall footprint

The core team will need to:

- Determine the submission specifications:

Should the designs be delivered in a digital or physical format? If digital, what format? (PDF, JPG, something else?)

What size paper should the designs fit on? (Letter, legal, tabloid, poster?)

Will physical models of the designs be required?
- Decide whether to allow applicants to submit variations or multiple entries

Step 7: Promote the Competition

- Pick a name and design a logo for the competition.
- Launch a website and create or commission print and digital promotional materials that can be used during the contest and after the winners are announced.
- Decide how the competition will be promoted (e.g., local news, social media, radio, email), who will do the marketing, who will be contacted.
- Spread the word to local leaders, influencers, educators, housing advocates, design-build and real estate professionals, and chapters of the American Institute of Architects and the American Institute of Building Designers.

Continued ►

IMAGE: DESIGN BY NATALY LOPEZ, SAN ANTONIO ADU DESIGN COMPETITION, CITY OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (2023)

An Inspiring Example

► More than 200 entries were received for the ADU design competition hosted in 2023 by the City of San Antonio, Texas, the local architecture and planning firm Able City, and the latter's nonprofit affiliate City Makery. An AARP Community Challenge grant helped pay for animated videos (in English, Spanish and American Sign Language), a social media campaign and printed materials. Winning entries were chosen for each of six categories, including Most Accessible Design (pictured), which was created by an architecture student at the University of Texas, San Antonio.

MOST ACCESSIBLE DESIGN - NATALY LOPEZ

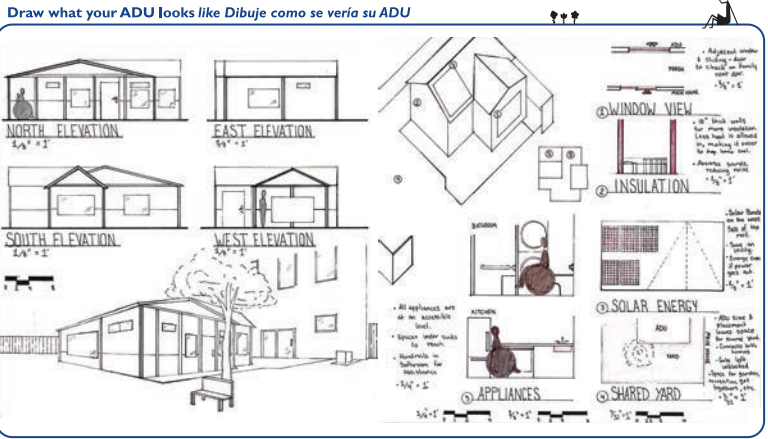


IMAGE: DESIGN BY MARK KRZYZANOWSKI AND KAMMIE TAVARES, BETTER BLOCK HAWAII AFFORDABLE ARU DESIGN COMPETITION (2023), KAUAI, HAWAII

Getting Online

In addition to describing the contest, explaining the reasons for it, and hosting the competition’s rules and details, the website can be a portal where applicants can upload their contest submissions.

It’s often easiest and most cost-effective to house the contest’s website and materials on the lead agency or partner’s website. Among the benefits of doing so is that an existing website has a traffic history and is likely being managed by a skilled webmaster or team.

If that option isn’t available, a website can be created by opening an account with a web hosting company, many of which will secure a domain name, set up email addresses and provide templates for building a simple website and even submission forms. Some tips:

- Include the competition’s name in its website, URL and email address.
- The website can be launched in stages, so don’t stress about taking all of its content live at once.
- The site’s opening page (also called the landing or home page) should be easy to use and briefly explain the competition.
- Use sub-landing pages or article pages for posting the in-depth information and details.
- Assess whether the web pages or materials need to be provided in multiple languages.
- The contest’s website should be public (unless it’s an internal-only competition, such as for students at a particular school).

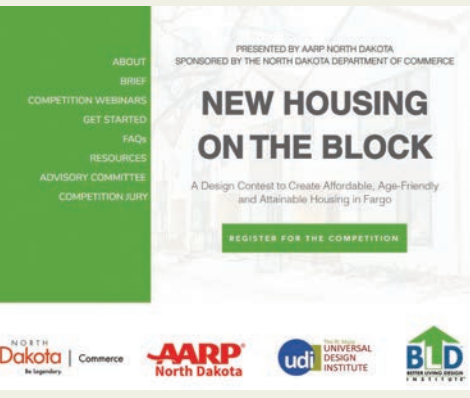
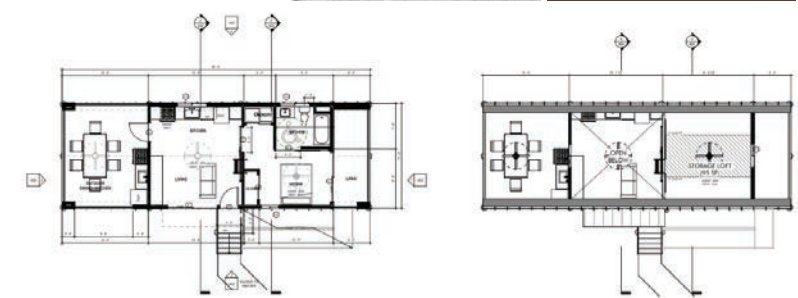
Since most social media sites require users to have an account, promotions and photo collections on platforms such as X, Facebook and Instagram can supplement a competition’s public-facing website but should not be used instead of one. All text on the website and within the promotional materials and PDFs should be well-written and free of grammatical, typographical and design errors. Check all hyperlinks. ■

An Inspiring Example

► Hawaii-based college students and recent graduates were invited to participate in the Affordable Housing Design Competition, hosted by Better Block Hawai’i, with funding from a 2023 AARP Community Challenge grant. The goal: Increase awareness about affordable additional rental units (ARUs). The assignment: develop a design for an ARU that could be built on the island of Kaua’i. This winning design is modeled after a *kauhale*, a traditional Hawaiian compound with multiple living spaces.

Mark Krzyzanowski & Kammie Tavares

This winning team developed living spaces modeled after the *kauhale* design of traditional Hawaiian homes. A *kauhale* is a compound of structures that make up the holistic living space for the family unit. The title of the proposal “E hoi kiko” means a call for us to return. The title does not just simply mean, “Let’s Go Home”, but rather it is a proposal to turn toward ‘ike kupuna (ancestral knowledge) and reincorporate ‘Oia’i design in living spaces. The team used each part of this phrase to describe their proposal, which includes three structures: Hale Noa (Main house), Hale Papa’a (Storehouse), and Hale Ka’a (Vehicle house).



▲ The opening webpages for Missing Middle Housing-themed contests in Fargo, North Dakota (top), and Omaha, Nebraska. The menu in the left column links to related pages. The content is also available as a downloadable PDF.

Host a Pre-Event Event

One way to ensure that there will be interest in the competition is to ask potential applicants to register for and attend an informational webinar. That can help ensure that applicants understand what they're getting into, and it can increase the likelihood of receiving quality submissions.

The webinar can present:

- An introduction about the reasons for the competition and its goals
- The rules and judging criteria
- An explanation of the competition process
- A review of the schedule and submission requirements
- An overview of universal design and the benefits of its use in all kinds of housing
- Examples of desirable universal design and age-friendly design features
- A checklist of the drawings needed and at what measurement scale
- A discussion about the information that should be included on and with the drawings and what a good submission looks like

Step 8: Get Ready for the Entries

- Contestants can be told to submit their application and design by email attachment, or they can be directed to an online submission portal.
- Whatever delivery method is chosen, be sure the platform can handle the transmission of large digital files, such as PDFs, JPEGs, MOVs or similar.
- To ensure that the application packets will be organized in the same way, provide the applicants with an outline or table of contents for the order in which the submission pages should be presented
- Test the submission method before opening it to applicants. (Be sure to close the platform once the competition's deadline has passed.)

Awards and acclaim

What will the winner or winners receive? Monetary prizes are always valued. If funds aren't available, certificates and publicity can also make the win meaningful.

Since it can be hard to predict how many submissions a competition will receive, especially during an inaugural year, it's best to not announce in advance how many winners will be named.

If there are several quality designs to choose from, the judges can tier the awards (first place, second place, third place) or create different categories based on home types or award groupings such as finalists and honorable mentions.

Using the winning designs

Be sure to have a strategy for how the designs, drawings, details and images can be used for publicity and shared, especially with media outlets.

If the competition is hosted in partnership with a local government, that town, city or county can be encouraged to purchase the winning plans, display the images on its website, make the designs available for free or at a low cost, and incorporate them into a government-hosted program that fast-tracks or preapproves selected building plans.

Or the website can announce the winners and provide a link for purchasing the plans or hiring the designer or firm.

Work with the sponsoring organization's legal advisers to determine what caveats, disclaimers, copyrights, and general liability and ownership statements need to be posted on the competition's website, application, promotional materials and winning submissions.

Visit [AARP.org/HousingDesign](https://www.aarp.org/HousingDesign) for links to related competition websites, participant materials, publications and videos.

Step 9: Announcing the Awardees

Housing design competitions have the ability to live long beyond the contest period since what is being imagined and proposed can actually be created!

- Once the winning designs are out in the world, revisit the outlets that promoted the contest's launch. Provide them with information and images that can be used for articles, videos and social media posts.
- Celebrate the winning designs by displaying the drawings and plans in a public setting (such as a library or town hall).
- If funds are available, host an opening night event to which the applicants, local leaders and the public can be invited.
- Consider creating a printed or downloadable booklet featuring the design images, floor plans and other details.
- Ask developers to build one of the winning designs. (The residence can serve as a demonstration home before it is sold.)
- If the contest results in preapproved plans or fast-track permitting, promote the designs and any homes that are built. (Ask the owners of such homes to allow them to be showcased as part of an invitation-only home tour. ■)

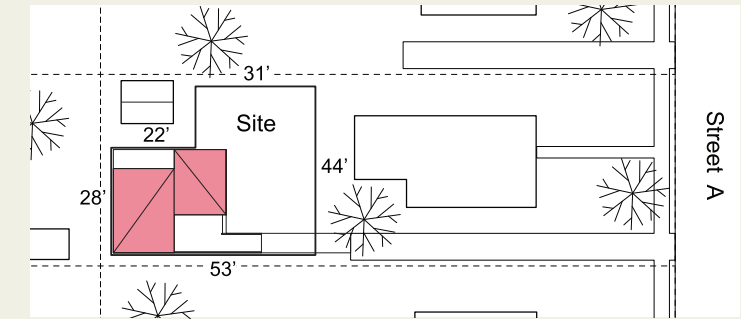
► Signs on display at a celebratory event for the ADU design competition in Omaha, Nebraska.

Competition Courtesy

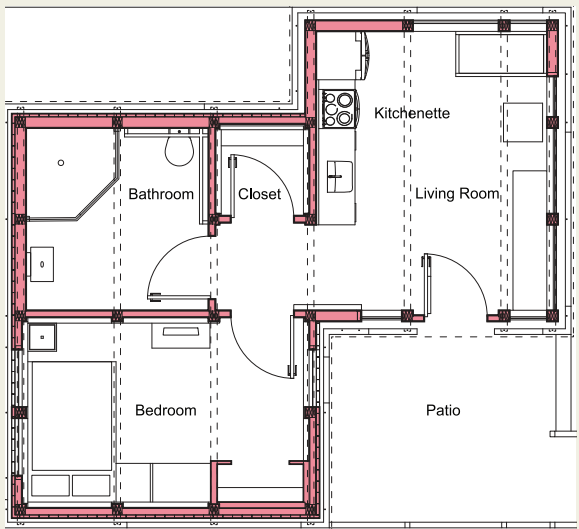
- Notify the winners and other entrants before any public announcement is made.
- Prepare, proofread and issue a media release that lists the winners and note how and where the winning entries can be seen.
- Update the competition's website with images and information about the winning entries.
- Thank the people who served on the core team, the judging panel and any advisory committees. (Appreciation can be in the form of a certificate or formal letter of recognition, a handwritten thank-you note, a gift card, or promotional item from the hosting organization.)



An Inspiring Example



► In 2018, the Kentucky Division of Aging and Disability Services received a \$10,000 AARP Community Challenge grant to support an ADU design competition with the University of Kentucky College of Design. The pictured site plan (above) and floor plan (right) are for an accessible, 500-square-foot, one-bedroom, one-bath backyard ADU.



THE TIMELINE

Create a Calendar

Few if any of the people involved in planning and implementing a housing design competition will work on the project full-time. Most will have a job and other obligations, so create a practical timeline with a realistic schedule for deliverables. The following checklist is an example of how the work can be divided into phases. The amount of time needed for each phase will vary, depending on the tasks, who is involved and their availability. When determining actual dates, think about the desired date for announcing the competition or the winners and then work backward from that important milestone to create a to-do list and schedule.

Phase 1: Steps 1, 2

- ☐ Draft a proposal and introductory materials about the competition and its goals
- ☐ Assemble a core team — and assign roles and responsibilities
- ☐ Plan a schedule of milestones, including the website launch, hosting a webinar, setting a submission deadline, starting the judging, selecting the winners and announcing the winners
- ☐ Determine the judging criteria
- ☐ Assemble a list of potential judges

Phase 2: Steps 3, 4

- ☐ Finalize the competition materials (including the website text, application form, webinar agenda and judging criteria)
- ☐ Establish the scoring criteria

Phase 3: Steps 5, 6

- ☐ Invite people to serve as judges
- ☐ Launch the website and application portal
- ☐ Promote the competition and open the registration for an informational webinar

Phase 4: Steps 7, 8

- ☐ Do a webinar practice run
- ☐ Host the webinar
- ☐ Open (and later close) the application portal
- ☐ Distribute submission packets to the judges
- ☐ Schedule the judging sessions
- ☐ Determine the awards and how the designs will be displayed and shared
- ☐ Select the winners

Phase 5: Step 9

- ☐ Notify the winners and other entrants
- ☐ Update the website
- ☐ Distribute a media release about the winners
- ☐ Plan and host an event
- ☐ Formally thank all involved
- ☐ Send a survey to participants
- ☐ Meet with or get feedback from the core team and judges about what worked and what didn't
- ☐ Keep promoting the winning designs and pursue potential constructions
- ☐ Start planning another competition!

An Inspiring Example

► After an ADU bill failed in the state legislature, AARP Rhode Island worked with the Rhode Island School of Design to host the Rhode Island ADU Design Competition. ADU advocates in the legislature served as “celebrity judges.” The image shows a primary residence and the first-place winning ADU design (seen in the foreground). Rhode Island’s ADU-supportive legislation passed in 2024.

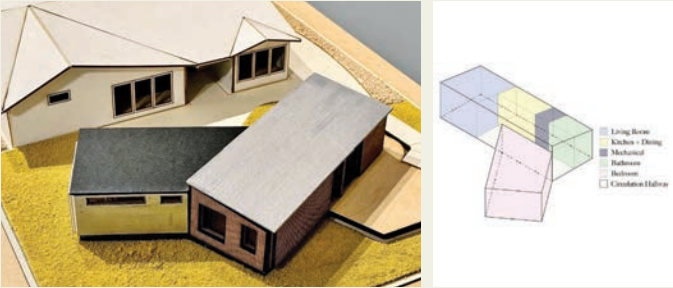


IMAGE: DESIGN BY HOLDEN RAPPUN, VIVIAN WEI, ALICE ZHANG, MALLORIE BECKNER, KYLEE HONG, ELIA MADEAU, VICTORIA STOTZ, XINYU DONG, YUKUN CUI AND TRE VOR GIBSON, RHODE ISLAND ADU DESIGN COMPETITION (2023)



►► In addition to establishing a website and application portal or mailbox, the core team will need to create or commission a competition logo, handouts and other promotional materials. These examples are from housing design competitions that AARP assisted with in (clockwise from above) Suffolk County, New York; Miami, Florida; Kaua'i, Hawaii; Hillsborough, Florida; and San Antonio, Texas.



LEARN MORE

- **AARP Community Challenge:** Learn about our annual “quick-action” grant program that helps local governments and nonprofits implement livability projects: AARP.org/CommunityChallenge.
- **AARP HomeFit Guide:** Available in five languages, the guide and its worksheets contain tips for making a home comfortable and safe for people of all ages: AARP.org/HomeFit.
- **AARP Livable Communities e-Newsletter:** Be the first to know when AARP publishes new livability resources, hosts free workshops and launches the AARP Community Challenge. Subscribe to our free newsletter for local leaders and advocates: AARP.org/LivableSubscribe.
- **AARP Livability Index:** Use our interactive tool to learn about communities nationwide: AARP.org/LivabilityIndex.
- **AARP State Offices:** Find local news and contact information for AARP offices nationwide: AARP.org/States.
- Visit AARP.org/HousingDesign for resources related to this guide.

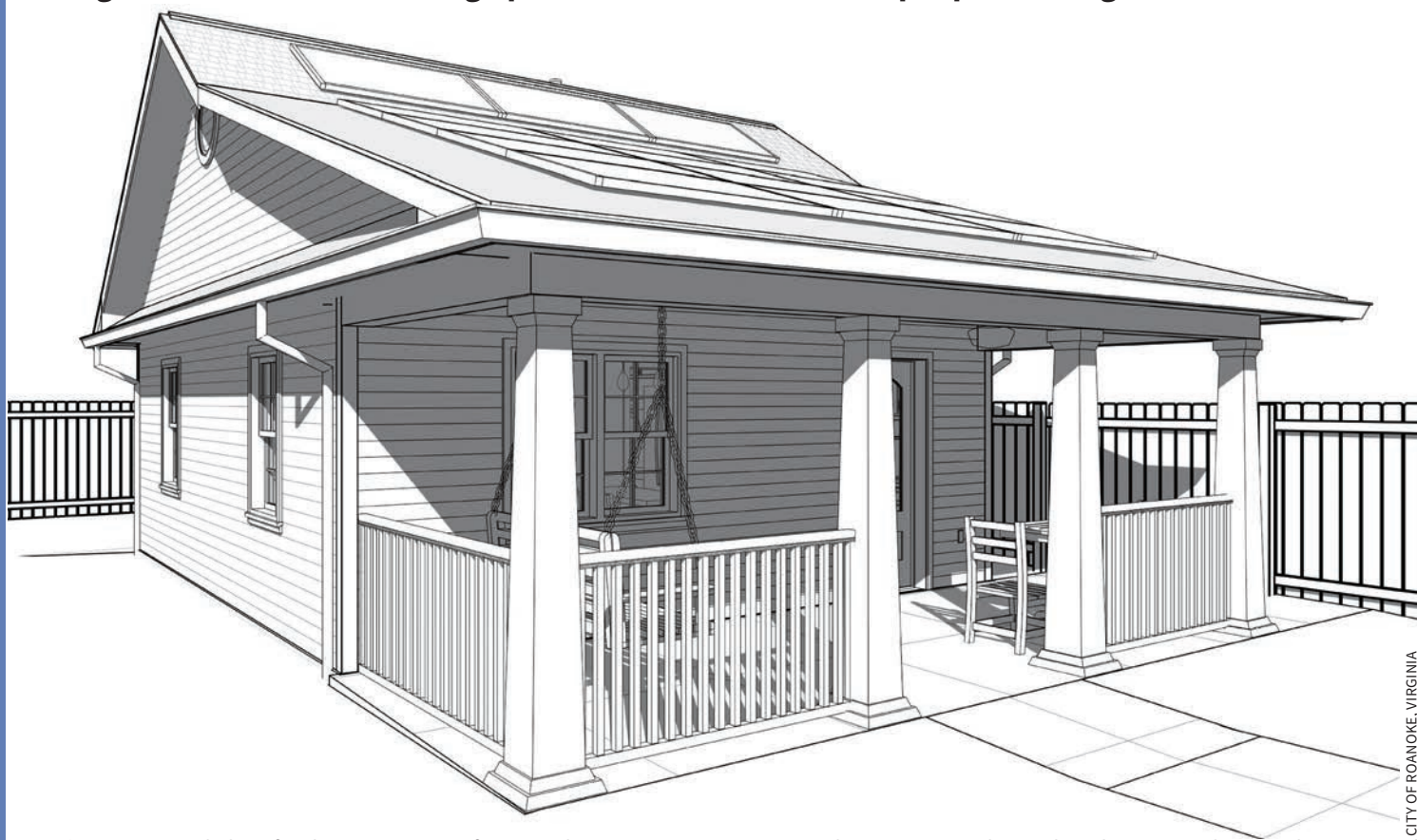
AARP Housing Design Competition Tool Kit

- WRITER/EDITOR**
Melissa Stanton, AARP Livable Communities
- CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**
Richard Duncan and Hannah Peele, RL Mace Universal Design Institute
- DIRECTOR, AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**
Mike Watson
- ART DIRECTOR:** Mimi Park, Design Park, Inc.
- COPY EDITOR:** Don Armstrong
- ART PRODUCTION:** Steve Walkowiak
- CONTRIBUTORS:** Rebecca Delphia, Caitlin Hillyard, Samantha Kanach, Lisa VanBuskirk



Housing Design Competition Tool Kit

How to encourage local leaders, community members, students and building professionals to get creative about housing options for older adults and people of all ages



▲ Preapproved plans for the top winners of an ADU design competition in Roanoke, Virginia, are housed on the city's website and can be submitted as part of a construction permit application. The first-place design (pictured) is a one-bedroom, one-bath 453-square-foot ADU.

By almost any measure, the United States has an insufficient supply of housing and housing options. Millions of people are living homes that are too small or too large for themselves or their families. In too many places, housing choices are limited to small apartments or oversized single-family houses. Older adults and people with mobility differences live in housing with stairs when they need a home with key spaces (the entry, kitchen, living area, bedroom and bath) on one level.

Local leaders, academic institutions, housing advocates and building professionals can encourage the creation of more housing options by hosting a housing design competition. Produced by AARP with the RL Mace Universal Design Institute, the *AARP Housing Design Competition Tool Kit* explains how a housing design contest can be a stepping stone for developing the housing a community needs.

Order or download this guide: [AARP.org/HousingDesign](https://www.aarp.org/HousingDesign)

D21084