

**CITY OF LEWISVILLE  
PRE-APPROVED BACKYARD COTTAGE DESIGN PROGRAM  
GUIDELINES FOR ARCHITECTS/DESIGNERS**



**LEWISVILLE**

Deep Roots. Broad Wings. Bright Future.

# PRE-APPROVED BACKYARD COTTAGE DESIGN PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR ARCHITECTS/DESIGNERS

Backyard cottages are a way for homeowners to add value to their property while providing a new housing option that is currently scarce in Lewisville. Backyard cottages support “Thriving Neighborhoods”, one of the Big Moves identified in the Lewisville 2025 plan, by providing new and unique housing choices that appeal to people of different ages, backgrounds, and incomes. Allowing and promoting accessory cottages, now called backyard cottages, was specifically referenced in the 2025 Plan Update. The Lewisville 2025 plan is a strategic plan designed to guide the City of Lewisville over the next several years as it moves towards celebrating its centennial in 2025. The Lewisville 2025 plan was developed after more than a year of public input and discussion that garnered hundreds of ideas and suggestions. Nine “Big Moves” were identified by the community as goals for 2025.

The Pre-Approved Backyard Cottage Design Program for Architects/Designers (Program) as outlined in these guidelines (Guidelines) is designed to help support homeowners and streamline the process of building a backyard cottage, which may also be known as an accessory dwelling unit or “granny flat.” A backyard cottage is defined in the City’s Unified Development Code as “[a] detached, self-contained dwelling unit that is secondary to the principal building and is subordinate in area, extent, or purpose to the principal building or principal use served. An accessory building with shower/bath and kitchen facilities is considered a backyard cottage.” Through this Program, the City seeks to partner with architects and designers to provide City pre-approved backyard cottage designs. Applicant architects and designers (Designers) will submit designs for pre-approval and all pre-approved designs will be made available in an online gallery on the City website (Online Gallery). This helps homeowners identify plans and smooths the permitting process as the only items remaining to be reviewed by the City are site-specific items. It gives both the Designer and homeowner more certainty as they begin the process of building a backyard cottage. All submitted designs are reviewed by the City of Lewisville Planning Department (Planning Department) and the City of Lewisville Building Services Department (Building Services) for compliance with currently adopted codes. The Planning Department will also offer suggestions based on the pattern book created by the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), attached as Appendix A, but these suggestions are not binding. Designers will retain any intellectual property rights in the designs. **Homeowners will be responsible for purchasing the design from the Designer and providing the required site, foundation, grading/drainage and framing plans to the City to receive the building permit.**

**For more information, contact:**

**City of Lewisville**

**Planning Department**

151 W. Church Street

Lewisville, Texas 75056

972-219-3455

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

- Encourage backyard cottages in Lewisville, thereby increasing housing choices and options for more housing affordability in Lewisville.
- Simplify the backyard cottage permitting process for homeowners and provide clarity on process.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

All Designers are encouraged to submit design plans for backyard cottages. These can be existing plans that have been previously prepared and do not need to be created specifically for this program, provided they meet the design standards below and all local, state, and federal requirements.

## **PROCESS OVERVIEW**

Designers may submit design plans for backyard cottages to city for review and pre-approval. The Planning Department and Building Services will review all submissions within ten to fifteen business days following submission, using the process used for building permit review. A maximum of two designs will be accepted from any single architect or designer at any given time, though this may be changed in the future by City staff based on participation. Up to six images of each pre-approved design along with other required information as outlined herein will be made public in the Online Gallery on a template provided by the City with contact information for the Designer. Interested homeowners will be responsible for reaching out to the Designer directly to obtain permission to use the design plan and the full set of plans. The homeowner will also be required to obtain a building permit to construct a backyard cottage. The building permit requires submission of certain documentation, including but not limited to: the full pre-approved design plan and information unique to the homeowner's property, a site plan (survey with backyard cottage dimensions, location and setbacks), a grading/drainage plan, foundation plan, and framing plan. The framing plan, grading/drainage plan and foundation plans must be sealed by an engineer licensed in the State of Texas.

## **DESIGN EXAMPLES**

If a Designer’s plan is approved, the design plan will be made available as part of the Online Gallery as a pre-approved backyard cottage plan.

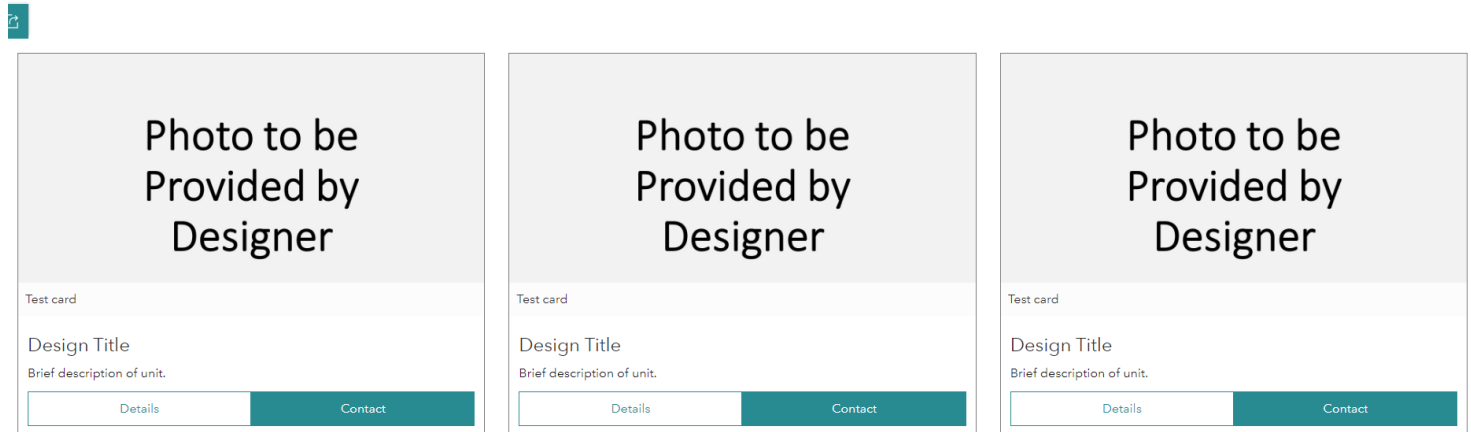
The pre-approved backyard cottage plan posted in the Online Gallery will include the following information provided by the Designer in the Designer’s application:

- the design plan’s basic design specifications, including the name of the design, the number of bedrooms, the square footage, height (in feet and stories) and the building pad dimension requirements of the backyard cottage as designed;
- A summary of the design and a ‘how-to use the plans’ explaining next steps;
- contact information for the Designer, including a person to contact, email, phone number, and, if available, website; and
- up to six images including a basic floorplan.

The following is an example of how the city may organize the posting. Note, this is an example only and does not reflect the final formatting or layout of the postings. The city reserves the right to post all pre-approved design plans in the Online Gallery in any form or layout the city so chooses.

## Pre-Approved Plans

\*Architects who are interested in creating a backyard cottage plan for the City, can apply [here](#).\*



## DESIGN PLANS

All pre-approved design plans must be compliant with the 2021 International Residential Code with local amendments and the City of Lewisville Unified Development Code (UDC). While many of these standards must be applied in a site-specific context, the attached pattern book provides guidance on how to make designs applicable to many lots in the city limits. Homeowners will be required to ensure their chosen backyard cottages meet all zoning and design requirements for their property as described in the city's UDC. UDC provisions applicable to backyard cottages include, but may not be limited to, the following:

[Zoning Use Tables](#) (Article VII, Chapter 2 of the UDC)

[Supplemental Standards for Back Yard Cottages](#) (Article VII, Chapter 3, Section 1 of the UDC)

[Residential Zoning Districts](#) (Article VI, Chapter 5 of the UDC)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Planning Department staff at 972.219.3455 or [planning@cityoflewisville.com](mailto:planning@cityoflewisville.com).

## APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Review the pattern book to see which design styles are most suitable to homes and lots in Lewisville.
2. Review all local, state and federal regulations for backyard cottages.
3. Complete an application. Fill out the application form, attached to this guide as Appendix B, and email the application and attached plans for review to [planning@cityoflewisville.com](mailto:planning@cityoflewisville.com). Designer shall acknowledge that all information provided in the application, unless otherwise stated herein, may be included on the city's website as part of this program. Applications shall include:
  - a. Contact information for the Designer.
  - b. Maximum 300-word plan summary.
  - c. Maximum 150-word 'how-to use the plans' explaining next steps. Please note whether homeowners can license the plan with no further involvement or if you can provide additional services (at additional cost) to help complete their project.
  - d. Full plan for the building permits including Mechanical, Electrical and Structural, so that pre-approval review can take place. Foundation, grading/drainage, site, and utility plan not required. PDF format, one file. **This will not go on City website and will be reviewed by staff only.**
  - e. Up to six image files, PDF format, including a minimum of one floorplan.
  - f. Signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The Planning Department Director is authorized to sign the MOA on behalf of the city. **The signed MOA will not be posted to the city website**, but will be subject to the Texas Public Information Act if requested by a member of the public.
4. Designs are reviewed by the Planning Department and Building Services.
5. Approved designs will be posted in the Online Gallery and notice of approval will be sent to the architect/designer.

## DESIGN REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE

Proposed designs are reviewed by the Planning Department and Building Services for compliance with the City's currently adopted building codes and the backyard cottage standards that can be found in the UDC, in addition to any other local, state, or federal criteria. Designs will be accepted if they meet all minimum local, state, and federal standards. Suggestions may be made in the review to better fit the pattern book, but these suggestions are not binding. Once accepted, the design

will be added to the City webpage list of pre-approved backyard cottage design plans. A notification will be sent to the Designer if their design is accepted or with the required revisions to be compliant with all standards. There is no fee to submit a design. Design review typically averages three weeks.

## **PROCESS TO REMOVE OR UPDATE DESIGNS**

Should the Designer wish to have a design removed from the Online Gallery or no longer participate in the pre-approval program, please email [planning@cityoflewisville.com](mailto:planning@cityoflewisville.com) with the name of the plan(s) to be removed. Please allow up to two weeks for plan removal.

Should the Designer need to update any of the information provided, then the Designer should email a new application to [planning@cityoflewisville.com](mailto:planning@cityoflewisville.com) within 7 days of the change, and clarify in the text of the email which design they are wishing to update, except that design plans will only need to be submitted if the change is to the design. Unless information included in the MOA between the City and the Designer requires amendment, a new MOA will not be required. If the design is being updated, the updated design will be reviewed internally using the same process as the original submittal. If approved, it will be replaced in the Online Gallery. The original design will remain in the Online Gallery unless it is requested to be removed during review of the updated version, or the plan is either no longer available from the designer or no longer in compliance with the requirements outlined herein. The Designer must notify Planning Department staff immediately using the contact information provided herein when a design plan in the Online Gallery is no longer available, and such design plan shall be removed.

The city may remove a design from the program if the design is no longer compliant with the standards outlined herein, applicable City ordinances, or any other applicable local, state, or federal standards. The city will notify the Designer so they may submit a revised design if desired, and if not, the noncompliant design will be removed. The city may remove a design from the program for any other reason and notify the Designer.

## **USE OF DESIGN PLANS**

The use and licensing of all design plans is a private agreement between the Designer and the homeowner. By pre-approving a design plan, the city states only that the pre-approved design plan meets building code standards and city-wide zoning standards. All proposed backyard cottage plans will be evaluated and approved by the city based on the specific site proposed. A pre-approved

backyard cottage design plan may not meet all applicable local, state, and federal standards, including but not limited to the UDC, as they pertain to the homeowner's property.

## **REPORTING/OUTCOMES**

While not required, the city would like to receive feedback based on the program from homeowners and Designers. Any feedback is appreciated and may be sent to [planning@cityoflewisville.com](mailto:planning@cityoflewisville.com).

## **AMENDMENT OF GUIDELINES**

Designers and participants are subject to all guideline changes. These guidelines are subject to change without notice.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## APPENDIX A: PATTERN BOOK

**APPENDIX B: PRE-APPROVED BACKYARD COTTAGES DESIGN APPLICATION**