

Here's a Utah-specific scan of ADU ordinances that are working reasonably well in practice, what residents tend to support or push back on, and a model framework you could adapt for River Heights. I focused first on nearby Cache Valley cities, then looked statewide. I also anchored everything against current Utah law so your code will be defensible.

Quick backdrop: what state law already requires

Utah's 2021 "internal ADU" law (Utah Code 10-9a-530, created by HB 82) requires cities to allow at least one internal ADU in a detached single-family home, for long-term rental, with only certain limits. Cities may require one extra on-site stall for the IADU, can require replacing any garage parking that is converted, can prohibit IADUs in up to 25 percent of residential land area, and can require a simple rental permit. It defines IADUs as 30-day minimum rentals.

What nearby and peer Utah cities are doing

Cache Valley snapshot

Logan City

- 2024–2025 update allowed ADUs citywide and removed the 6,000 sq ft minimum lot rule. Height cap is 20 feet or the height of the primary dwelling, whichever is lower. Staff noted a debate about banning short-term rentals, which the council did not adopt. Logan maintains owner-occupancy, staff-level approvals, and a clear factsheet for applicants.

Providence

- ADUs are a permitted use "by right" in all residential zones if standards are met, with a long-standing chapter that spells out owner-occupancy and performance standards. Their housing page explains that ADUs are permitted citywide if conditions are met. Residents appreciate the clarity and predictability.

North Logan

- Earlier code used conditional use permits and heavy parking minimums. The city now uses an owner-occupancy acknowledgment and continues to emphasize single billing for utilities to reinforce that the site remains one household. This has helped enforcement.

Nibley

- Detached ADUs are allowed citywide and the city tracks results publicly. Staff discussed which provisions may be suppressing production, like requiring two dedicated off-street stalls behind the front plane, and considered streamlining to a single added stall. This is a good "lessons learned" example.

Wasatch Front examples

Salt Lake City

- In 2023 SLC moved ADUs to staff-level review to reduce friction while keeping owner-occupancy. The planning handbook and §21A.40.200 give clear dimensional and parking rules and explain registration. Residents favored easier approvals, and the council kept owner-occupancy as a neighborhood assurance.

Millcreek

- Adopted in 2021 with later refinements. City materials note mixed views during engagement but “significant grassroots support,” and they are streamlining again in 2025. Code sets a clear size envelope and occupancy of two adults plus children. The city frames ADUs as a moderate-income tool, which helped public buy-in.

Holladay

- ADUs permitted with owner on site, 30-day minimum rentals, license required when rented. Their public FAQ emphasizes that IADUs are not short-term rentals, which reduced confusion.

Ogden

- Clear size cap for detached ADUs at 300–800 sq ft and 25 percent of rear yard. The city also removed a business license fee requirement after state changes. These bright-line rules make review predictable.

Provo

- One ADU per lot, owner-occupied, single-family appearance standard, explicit parking and rental licensing mechanics. They use an open feedback portal for code changes and time-limit rental licenses to keep data current.

South Ogden

- Switched to “permitted with standards,” then fine-tuned detached ADU setbacks in 2024. This iterative posture is a good template for small cities that want to monitor and adjust.

St. George

- Uses a “permitted with standards” chapter for ADUs and guesthouses. The city trains staff, has public checklists, and leans on Utah Land Use Institute guidance that clarifies what cities can and cannot require under state law.

Park City and Moab

- Resort communities keep strong guardrails. Park City requires a deed restriction that prohibits nightly rental and requires owner occupancy, and it has a survey page to keep residents

engaged. Moab updated its code after HB 82 to emphasize workforce housing and long-term occupancy only. These are useful for guarding against STR conversion pressure.

What residents tend to like vs. dislike (from minutes, news, FAQs, and handbooks)

Generally supported

Clear, bright-line dimensional rules: maximum height around 20 feet for detached ADUs, setbacks like 5 feet sides and rear, and simple size caps such as 800 to 1,200 sq ft or 50 percent of the primary. Predictability avoids disputes and discretionary hearings. See Logan's 20-foot cap and Ogden's 300–800 sq ft standard.

By-right approvals when standards are met, rather than conditional use permits. This speeds compliant projects and reduces neighbor tensions because staff are applying clear code. Providence and SLC both moved this direction.

Long-term rental baseline. Residents are much more comfortable when codes clearly bar STR use for ADUs, especially internal units, and explain the 30-day rule. Holladay's and the state IADU definition help here.

Owner-occupancy in at least one unit. Many cities keep it, seeing it as a neighborhood quality guardrail. Salt Lake retained this in 2023.

Often contentious

Excess parking requirements. State law caps what you can require for IADUs at one extra stall and requires replacement of any garage stalls converted. Cities that ask for more, or force front-yard paving, see pushback. Nibley is revisiting its two-stall requirement as a barrier.

Conditional use permits for compliant detached ADUs. CUPs create uncertainty and meetings that feel performative. Cache Valley cities are considering removing CUPs for detached ADUs.

Allowing STRs in ADUs. Some cities allow them; most that do hear complaints about parking and churn. Resort cities prohibit STRs in ADUs and report fewer conflicts.

River Heights: a recommended framework

Below is a conservative, neighbor-friendly, state-compliant package that mirrors what has worked best nearby. You could adopt it largely by reference to state law, then add local choices for detached units

1) Two categories, two paths

- Internal ADU (IADU). Permit by right in all single-family zones, subject to Utah Code 10-9a-530. Require one additional on-site stall unless your base code already requires four stalls for

the primary, and require replacement of any garage stalls converted. Define IADUs as 30 days or longer, and require a simple rental permit. Allow the statutory option to exclude up to 25 percent of residential land area if you truly need an “impact buffer” near USU commuter streets, but I do not recommend using that in a small city unless you document a specific impact.

- External ADU (attached or detached). Permit by right if objective standards below are met. This tracks Providence, Logan’s 2024 modernization, and SLC’s staff-level approach.

2) Objective standards for external ADUs

- Height. Maximum 20 feet or the height of the primary dwelling, whichever is lower. This is now the Logan standard and reads well to neighbors.
- Size. Maximum of 800 to 1,000 sq ft, or 50 percent of the primary’s floor area, whichever is less. Ogden’s 300–800 sq ft range is a helpful lower and upper bound for small-lot contexts.
- Setbacks and separations. Side and rear 5 feet minimum. At least 6 feet from the primary structure, and 10 feet from any dwelling on an adjacent lot. South Ogden’s 2024 update is a clean model for this language.
- Parking. One additional off-street stall for an external ADU, allowed in tandem, on an improved surface, and behind the front plane. No driveway widening beyond a set maximum apron width. This meets the spirit of Nibley’s current rethink.
- Design. Secondary entrance located to the side or rear. Roof pitch and exterior materials visually compatible with the primary. No separate street-facing front door for an internal unit, echoing Provo’s “one front door” principle that preserves single-family appearance.
- Occupancy. Limit to one ADU per lot. Consider an occupancy cap, for example two adults and their children, similar to Millcreek, to curb crowding.
- Utilities. Single utility billing for the property by default, which North Logan uses to simplify enforcement and signal “one household site.” Prohibit separate meters for IADUs if desired, consistent with best-practice training materials.
- Short-term rentals. Prohibit STR use in ADUs. Codify the 30-day minimum. This aligns with state IADU rules and with resort-city practice that residents understand.

3) Process and enforcement

- By-right approvals. Building permit plus an ADU registration, no public hearing, and a simple checklist modeled on Logan’s factsheet and SLC’s handbook. Staff sign-off if standards are met.

- Owner-occupancy affidavit. Require the owner to live in either the primary or the ADU. Renew annually through a quick online self-certification tied to your rental license system, as Provo does. This reassures neighbors yet keeps the bar low.
- Revocation for violations. Add clear grounds to revoke the ADU registration for repeat nuisance, illegal STR use, or failure to meet parking and occupancy terms, similar to Ogden's permitting language.
- Data and reporting. Track addresses, unit type, and parking plan. Use the data in your Moderate-Income Housing reporting, following Providence's lead on clean public explanations.

Why this package will likely work for River Heights

It is state-clean. It implements the IADU statute as intended, adopts the parking and appearance standards the Legislature expected, and avoids discretionary tools that can trigger legal challenges.

It matches local context. Nearby codes that are going smoothly use by-right approvals with objective envelopes. Logan's 2024 update, Providence's by-right chapter, and SLC's staff-level changes are the strongest nearby signals. This avoids neighbor-versus-applicant hearings for compliant projects.

It addresses resident concerns without chilling production. You retain owner-occupancy, long-term rental only, single utility billing, and privacy-minded placement. Where cities see the most friction is CUPs and excessive parking, so the draft keeps those lean. Nibley's experience and Millcreek's engagement confirm that simpler rules plus education tend to draw broader support.

It is administratively light. A one-page factsheet like Logan's, plus an affidavit and an online renewal, is manageable for small staff.

Optional clauses to consider

- Targeted overlay limits. If you see acute parking spillover near USU routes, you can exclude up to 25 percent of residential land from IADUs by map, with findings, per statute. Use sparingly, with data.
- Deed restriction for external ADUs. Park City requires a simple deed notice barring nightly rental for the ADU. This can reduce future enforcement burden if STR pressure rises.
- Design booklets. SLC's ADU Handbook is an excellent template for a River Heights "how to" packet that shows compliant footprints, parking layouts, and privacy window ideas.

Appendix: source notes you can cite during deliberation

- State framework: Utah Code 10-9a-530 and HB 82 define IADUs, limit local discretion, set parking bounds, and define long-term rental.
- Logan: Citywide allowance, 20-foot height or height of the primary, removal of minimum lot size. Factsheet and 2024 ordinance update.
- Providence: ADUs by right with owner-occupancy and clear conditions.
- North Logan: Owner-occupancy acknowledgment and single billing for utilities. Earlier CUP-heavy approach documented.
- Salt Lake City: 2023 staff-level approvals retained owner-occupancy; handbook and §21A.40.200 detail standards.
- Millcreek: Engagement notes, more permissive than required by LUDMA, refining in 2025.
- Holladay: 30-day minimum and licensing when rented, public explainer.
- Ogden: Detached ADU size cap 300–800 sq ft; update eliminated outdated license fee language.
- Provo: Clear “one front door,” owner-occupancy, rental license timing and public feedback portal.
- South Ogden: 2023 code allowed internal, attached, and detached ADUs, then 2024 setback tune-ups.
- St. George: “Permitted with standards” model and ULUI guidance slide deck for city attorneys and planners.
- Park City and Moab: Workforce-oriented intent, deed-restricted no nightly rental in Park City; Moab updates after HB 82 to remove barriers while targeting long-term use.

Bottom line recommendation for River Heights

Adopt an ordinance that 1) implements IADUs exactly as the state requires, 2) permits external ADUs by right with simple, objective standards, 3) requires owner-occupancy in one unit, 4) limits ADUs to long-term rental, 5) uses one extra stall and allows tandem or alley solutions, 6) sets a modest envelope for detached units, and 7) pairs the code with a one-page applicant guide and an annual self-certification. This is the blend Cache Valley neighbors are converging on, it is easy to administer, and it has proven to be acceptable to most residents when paired with education and clear diagrams.

If you'd like, I can turn this into draft code text with River Heights section numbers and a matching one-page "ADU Applicant Guide" modeled on Logan's factsheet and SLC's handbook.

Perfect — let's build you a council-facing "argument kit" that is intentionally biased in favor of allowing ADUs, but grounded in fact, Utah law, and peer-city experience. You'll be able to use these points in council meetings, community Q&A, and written memos.

Talking Points in Favor of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

1.

State Law Already Requires Them (Internal ADUs)

Fact: Utah Code 10-9a-530 requires every city to allow at least one internal ADU in a detached single-family home, with only limited restrictions.

Talking Point: "The Legislature already decided that IADUs are legal statewide. Our choice is not whether to allow them, but whether to craft thoughtful, local rules for detached ADUs that protect River Heights while giving our residents options."

2.

Smart Growth & Housing Affordability

Fact: Utah faces a severe housing shortage. The Kem C. Gardner Institute has documented affordability gaps in every county. ADUs are one of the lowest-impact, most cost-effective solutions.

Talking Point: "This is a way for River Heights to contribute to the solution without inviting in large apartment complexes. An ADU adds one small home at a time, tucked into existing neighborhoods, instead of sprawling growth."

3.

Protects Character Better Than Alternatives

Fact: Detached ADUs are limited in size (usually capped around 800–1,000 sq ft), height (20 ft), and occupancy (2 adults + kids in many ordinances). Compare that with duplexes or large infill projects.

Talking Point: "If we say no to ADUs, the pressure for growth doesn't go away. It just pushes developers to propose denser housing types that neighbors often like even less. ADUs preserve the single-family feel while giving us controlled growth."

4.

Supports Multi-Generational Living

Fact: In Utah, many households want to house aging parents, returning children, or caregivers. Cities like Providence and North Logan already report strong demand for family-use ADUs.

Talking Point: “This is how families in River Heights can care for elderly parents or young adult kids while maintaining independence. It keeps our community intact, across generations.”

5.

Creates Modest, Predictable Rental Options

Fact: By law, IADUs must be rented for 30 days or more (no short-term rentals). Most cities, including Holladay, Ogden, and Park City, reinforce this to avoid Airbnb-style turnover.

Talking Point: “ADUs are not Airbnb hotels. These are long-term rentals—modest, safe, and often more affordable than any other unit available in Cache Valley. This helps teachers, police officers, and young families live here.”

6.

Owner-Occupancy Keeps Neighborhood Stability

Fact: Many Utah cities require that the owner live in either the primary or the ADU. Salt Lake City, Provo, and Providence all use this model.

Talking Point: “With the owner living on-site, River Heights maintains stable, invested neighborhoods. This isn’t absentee landlords—it’s homeowners opening part of their property responsibly.”

7.

Minimal Infrastructure Burden

Fact: ADUs typically connect to existing utilities, use one additional parking stall, and remain on a single billing account (as North Logan does). Compared to a subdivision, the strain is negligible.

Talking Point: “One ADU adds a single parking stall and taps into existing pipes. It’s a drop in the bucket compared to the strain of a 50-home subdivision. We get housing without new roads or sewer extensions.”

8.

Neighboring Cities Already Do This Successfully

Logan: Permits ADUs citywide, capped at 20 ft, with clear factsheets—no major backlash.

Providence: ADUs by right with owner-occupancy; residents appreciate predictability.

Nibley: Actively refining its rules to reduce barriers, showing an iterative, positive approach.

Talking Point: “We’re not the first mover here. Cache Valley neighbors are doing this—and doing it well. If we don’t allow ADUs, River Heights will fall behind and miss out on a proven, balanced tool.”

9.

Data and Accountability are Built-In

Fact: Cities like Provo and Ogden require annual renewals or self-certification, giving cities control and oversight.

Talking Point: “This isn’t a free-for-all. With an annual affidavit and simple registration, we’ll always know where ADUs are, who lives there, and whether they comply. It’s housing with accountability-built in.”

10.

A Win-Win for Property Rights & Community Needs

Fact: Allowing ADUs lets homeowners unlock property value responsibly while meeting community housing needs.

Talking Point: “This is the rare policy that respects property rights, helps families, eases housing costs, and preserves neighborhood character all at once. It’s a win for River Heights.”

Suggested Closing Line for Council

“Accessory dwellings are not a radical change. They are small, carefully regulated, and already working in Cache Valley cities. Saying yes means we strengthen families, create affordable housing options, and grow responsibly—on our own terms.”

Would you like me to draft this into a one-page council handout (with bullet points, evidence citations, and a side-by-side of “What ADUs Are” vs. “What They Aren’t”) that you could literally bring to the vote?

Great — here’s a tight, one-page council handout draft you can bring into deliberations. I kept it clean, persuasive, and citation-anchored, with a side-by-side section for quick clarity.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in River Heights

A Smart, Family-Friendly Housing Solution

Why River Heights Should Say YES to ADUs

Required by State Law: Utah Code 10-9a-530 already mandates cities to allow at least one internal ADU (IADU) in single-family homes. Our choice is how to shape local rules for external ADUs.

Protects Neighborhood Character: Detached ADUs are capped at modest sizes (800–1,000 sq ft, 20 ft tall). Logan and Ogden both use these limits to keep ADUs small and compatible.

Supports Families: ADUs allow multi-generational living—elderly parents, young adult children, or caregivers—while preserving independence. Providence and North Logan report strong demand for this.

Affordable Rentals: By law, ADUs must be rented for 30 days or longer (no short-term rentals). Holladay and Park City emphasize this, protecting neighborhoods from Airbnb churn.

Owner-Occupancy Safeguard: Cities like Salt Lake City, Provo, and Providence require the homeowner to live in either the main house or the ADU. This ensures stable, invested neighbors.

Minimal Infrastructure Impact: One added unit typically means one parking stall, no new streets, and shared utility connections—North Logan uses single billing to keep compliance simple.

Proven Locally: Logan, Providence, and Millcreek have already streamlined ADU approvals and report positive results with little backlash.

What ADUs Are vs. What They Are Not

ADUs ARE...

ADUs ARE NOT...

Long-term rentals (30+ days)

Airbnb-style nightly rentals

Small homes (800–1,000 sq ft, 20 ft tall)

Large apartment complexes or duplexes

Owner-occupied sites

Absentee landlord housing

Family-friendly: parents, kids, caregivers

Commercial boarding houses

Cost-effective housing solution

Infrastructure burden or high-traffic generators

A way to preserve neighborhood character while adding housing

A threat to River Heights' single-family feel

Bottom Line

Accessory Dwelling Units are already part of Utah law, and they are working successfully in Cache Valley and along the Wasatch Front. By adopting clear, neighbor-friendly rules, River Heights can:

- ✓ Support families
- ✓ Provide affordable housing
- ✓ Preserve our character
- ✓ Stay compliant with state law

"This is the rare policy that respects property rights, helps families, eases housing costs, and preserves neighborhood character all at once."