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Negative Effects Associated With Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in San Diego, CA

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Abstract

ADUs are gaining much popularity but have caused many issues for homeowners who would like to maintain a single-family residential neighborhood. “The new zoning policy is destroying our neighborhoods. Increasing density comes with limitations on the “carrying capacity” of the land. Existing zoning policies that allow housing at any cost are not the solution” (Berta, 2021, para.4). The research is intended to inform the local government of the current issues associated with ADUs and be a tool in the making of new policies. Primary data was collected through mixed methods (MMR) with the participation of key informants and San Diego County residents. Secondary data was collected and analyzed to further support the research. The literature review was conducted on the subtopics 1) vehicle congestion for parking and traffic 2) population density exceeds infrastructure 3) safety hazards in case of an emergency, peer review on each subtopic will enhance the study to support each. The research is impactful because it will identify some of the issues associated with ADUs while providing a blueprint of other ideas that can be taken for further action to ease the issues San Diego County is facing.

Keywords: Accessory dwelling units (ADUs), vehicle congestion, population density, safety, first responders, infrastructure

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) have become a progressively popular approach to increasing the supply of housing in California, predominantly as lower-cost units in single-family neighborhoods where bigger, newer developments are not welcomed. The housing shortage has become a substantial vital urban issue faced by the United States. From 2000 to 2015, 23 states that have under-produced 7.3 million housing units, which can be compared to the 5.4% total housing stock in the United States (Baron et al., 2018, pg. 4). The problem has progressed throughout the years, making it a severe issue in many states like California where we consistently see people losing homes or becoming homeless due to the inability of sustaining affordable housing with the current rent increase. Between 1980 and 2010, major metropolitan areas in California have added 120,000 units per year, yet it is not enough. California's major metropolitan areas should be constructing between 190,000 to 230,000 units to stay afloat by providing affordable housing and keeping the housing cost consistent with growth elsewhere in the United States (Taylor, 2015, pg. 21, para.3). As the housing supply continues to lack, we will continue to see a ripple effect that not only affects the housing prices but impacts renters and low-income families who depend on affordable housing.

ADUs continue to gain popularity throughout the United States as an alternative to providing affordable housing, increasing the housing stocks in the housing markets after the housing crash in 2008. Currently, "California's housing production is not keeping pace with demand. In the last decade, fewer than half of the homes needed to keep up with the population growth were built. Additionally, new homes are often constructed away from job-rich areas" (2022, pg. 3, para. 1). Unfortunately, the lack of housing that is supposed to meet people's needs

is negatively impacting housing affordability and causing housing costs to significantly increase for California renters. Affordable housing is becoming less accessible, which is driving people to the suburbs to be able to afford housing but causing them to drive longer distances between the housing that is affordable and their workplace, some may even consider packing themselves in a small, shared space which results in a lower quality of life and produce negative environmental impacts (2022, pg. 3, para. 1). Desperate for solutions to the housing crisis California legislators just like legislators from other states have encouraged ADU units which are also known as granny flats, in-law units, backyard cottages, secondary units etc. The Housing and Community Development (HCD) is the state's leader in the local ADU regulations, even though it is an option, the interest in ADUs have grown among many cities, counties, and homeowner as a solution to supply affordable housing (*Accessory dwelling units*).

To promote the construction of ADUs, California has currently adjusted and changed its ADU laws and has removed most if not all barriers to the development of ADUs in a residential zoning area. Due to these new laws, California ADU construction has surged and as of last year one in seven homes constituted of ADUs in their backyards (Ezplans, 2023, para. 3). Assembly Bill 2221 which took place on January 1st, 2023, required all agencies involved with either reviewing ADU plans that include but are not limited to the planning departments and the utility companies must respond within 60 days from the day the plans were submitted. Ultimately, reducing the application and processing time. The bill bypassed, nulled, and voided any local ordinance that did not confirm the changes instituted by the current bill. The current loosened ADU laws are currently supported by Government Code Sect. 65852.150, California Legislature has declared ADUs are a valuable form of housing, provide housing for family members, students, the elderly, disabled people, and others at a lower market price, homeowners can benefit from added

income, allow the construction of ADUs in single-family or multifamily residential zones as a way to increase the rental house stock in the state (*Code section, 2019*).

Statement of the Problem

San Diego County's unregulated ADU policies are becoming the cause of the many problems that have been overlooked in the efforts to create affordable housing.

1. Current ADU policies in San Diego County are causing vehicle congestion for parking and traffic.
2. Under the regulation, ADU policy promotes overcrowding and population density, which exceed the infrastructure.
3. Under the regulation, ADU policy creates safety hazards in case of an emergency.

Purpose of study

Overall, legislators believe that ADUs are a current solution to the housing crisis we are facing, instead of a solution it is placing a band-aid to the problem, a temporary solution. The purpose of the study is to analyze the problems associated with the construction of ADUs in residential zoning and to voice the issues that are being faced in residential neighborhoods and the effects of overpopulating a city. It is important to also dive into the issues associated with the new current ADU laws that are changing residential zoning neighborhoods that are slowly being converted into miniature apartment complexes, which in return is demolishing the "American Dream" of families owning a single-family home in a neighborhood where children can run around play on the street without the congestions of cars consistently moving through the street. It is important to continue to have a balance between residential zoning and affordable housing, there needs to be a limit to the ADU laws to preserve our neighborhoods, but still provide affordable housing for families and low-income individuals. It will provide insight to legislators into the

problems that could've possibly been overlooked and not considered when such laws have passed. It will benefit many communities around San Diego County who are eager to preserve residential zoning.

Significance of the study

As the study is made to voice the concerns of current homeowners who are fighting to preserve single-family residential neighborhoods, it serves as a tool to help public administrators make better decisions for affordable housing. The significance of the study is to persuade public administrators, city planners, and development services to venture into other solutions or ideas that do not involve the destruction of single-family neighborhoods, but instead encourage developers to invest in affordable housing by providing incentives that will benefit developers in the long run. Reduce the number of allowed ADUs in single-family homes to one and require homeowners to provide homeowner to provide off-street parking. The findings will have deepened the current understanding of the negative effects that have been caused by the new ADU policies.

Main research questions

San Diego County has continued to allow ADU constructions, but the questions remain how we can regulate the ADU unit laws and prevent the issues that have risen, how will the neighborhoods be preserved from the overflow of cars on the streets by increasing the usage of public transportation and regulating the number of units built in one property depending on the lot and decrease the safe hazards.

Theory of Change and Assumption

If San Diego County implemented and enforced stricter regulations governing the building of ADU units in areas with residential (R) zoning

1. Then there would be less vehicle congestion for parking and traffic

2. Then population density would not exceed the infrastructure
3. Then there would be fewer safety hazards in case of an emergency.

Limitation of study

The general intent of this study is to examine the current ADU laws and their associated effects, by taking the city of San Diego as a study area, this study's target is to examine the current local government ADU ordinance and revisit some regulations that are causing negative effects. Currently, San Diego's ordinance is allowing garage conversions into ADUs and multiple units or a building that can house up to six families which means each unit will have roughly one car. The study is not to inform the reader of the success of ADUs in providing affordable housing but to inform both legislators of the issues associated with the current ADU ordinance that are destroying residential zoning. The community/public will also benefit from the study as the issues that are being faced daily with the overcrowded neighborhoods, traffic, the city's infrastructure, and overall safety of the public and neighbors. This paper could help urban planners and policymaker understand how facilitating the ADU laws have created problems and will serve as an efficient tool for enhancing ADU regulations that will limit the increasing issues while safely providing affordable housing to those who need it.

Definition of terms

There are terms among the ADU regulations that need to be defined as they are used in the research paper.

ADU regulations refer to a set of laws or rules that give individuals guidance on what is allowed in San Diego County when it comes to the application process, building the ADU, inspection criteria, and how they are consistently changing.

Areas with residential zoning refers to single-family residence, suburban homesteads, and other designations like houses, apartments, co-ops, and condos.

Congestion refers to the growing population in San Diego County whether it is within residential zones or increase of vehicles in residential zoning and highways.

Emergency Response refers to the individuals who respond to emergencies in a residence i.e. police, firefighters, and/or paramedics. Members of the community who respond to any emergency or disaster.

Fewer Safety Hazard in Case of an Emergency refers to the safety precautions that are annotated within the handbook, and what safety features are required in an ADU. Fewer refers to the decrease in hazards when there is one dwelling or two within one property.

Less Vehicle Congestion for parking and traffic refers to stopped or quite often as stop-and-go traffic, reducing speed on the highway, and lack of parking in a general area or a neighborhood due to increased congestion. Population density is a major factor of vehicle congestion, less vehicle congestion means population density is either slowing down or individuals are fleeing San Diego County.

Stricter Regulations refer to the change of the current regulations to a set of stern regulations that put a halt to more than one ADU within a property, require off-street parking, and allow for more safety features to prevent hazards.

Population Density refers to the rapid increase of population as the ADU policies have changed and allow for more units in residential zoning.

Population density would not exceed infrastructure refers to the population per unit of land area affects the need for infrastructure and the services provided, waits are longer at restaurants, nail and hair salons, grocery store check-out lines are longer, etc.

Expected impact of the research

As I cannot predict the outcome of the research, I can only predict the outcome of the study. The study will identify the issues associated with the issue that are associated with ADUs and potentially encourage legislators to find different solutions to the affordable housing crisis as they take into account the issues associated with their current solutions.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

ADUs remain the most probable solution to increase affordable housing and create a wider assortment of housing options for many and in areas where affordable housing is in limited supply. There are many challenges associated with ADUs that legislators have failed to address through the creation of the new ADU laws. There are groups like the Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) that have been around for quite some time fighting against any new developments/constructions within their neighborhoods. The groups “range widely in their size, influence, and goals. Some might oppose a new prison or sports stadium getting built nearby, while others may protest a new high-rise or a bridge blocking scenic views,” (Flaherty, 2022, para. 2). Fast-forward to most recent times where the NIMBY is fighting for more gentrification and homeownership or balking on anything that could be built and potentially lower the value of their property. People tend to protect their valuables at all costs and this including their property according to Flaherty, many of the individuals who are part of the NIMBY are currently seen as having “racist or classist overtones in their zeal to keep housing or services for low-income or marginalized groups out of their neck of the woods,” (Flaherty, 2022 para. 14).

Vehicle congestion for parking and traffic

On the contrary, Jim Adair conducted interviews with New York residents who are facing similar issues to those currently faced in San Diego County. Many residents rallied to oppose the plans of converting a parking lot that is the heart of the community into a 64-unit proposed to support housing for people who are currently homeless (Adair, 2021, para. 1). A resident participating in the rally expressed his opinion that he shares with others as they do not oppose to lend a hand to people who need support or who don't have homes, “but, increasing the population

density with... people going through the most troubling and difficult times of their lives... this may not be the appropriate place to do it,” (Adair, 2021, para. 3). In this case, residents are concerned of losing the parking to the nearby arenas, sports fields, and parking provided for family and friends who come visit. Parking within a neighborhood is valuable to many of the homeowners who one day expect to have family and friends over, or who simply would like to go to the local park and have adequate parking without having to drive around just to find a parking spot. “The main reasons cited for the opposition are usually that the project will decrease the value of properties, and that it will increase crime, traffic, and noise in the communities,” (Adair, 2021, para. 9).

ADUs were introduced to many homeowners as ‘granny flat’ housing for elderly family members who need assistance and cannot carry out daily routines on their own, let alone support their household. Somehow many homeowners have changed the reasoning behind ‘granny flats’ to a source of income and providing affordable housing. In reality, ADUs or granny flats were created with the idea of assisting the elderly and increasing the usage of public transportation, unfortunately, this idea has not gone far. As San Diego adopts the ADU ordinance, “purportedly to help the housing crisis by changing zoning in transit priority areas (TPAs) and allowing the construction of unlimited multiple ADUs or backyard “granny flats”- more like “granny towers”- if the property is within a half mile of the TPA,” (Berta, 2021, para. 2). According to the Berta a San Diego State University professor, close to 60 percent of residents in San Diego live near a TPA, which only means that ADUs approvals have increased by 965 percent since 2016. With the changes, “zoning giveaways for these backyard “granny towers” are no setbacks on side and rear yards, no parking required, and green space replaced with concrete. The “towers” can be 30 feet

high (two to three stories) and house up to six families crammed next to mostly single-story family homes,” (Berta, 2021, para. 3).

Requirements for landlords to provide off-street parking should be considered in ADU-zoned areas, mandating off-street parking will benefit both proponents and opponents. “Both sides recognize the need to enforce a healthy percentage utilization of on-street parking, on average around 60%,” (Purgula, 2022, para. 12). Other studies conducted in Portland, Oregon, and San Francisco Bay Area, have established that on average ADU households own .9 cars for each unit, which depending on the units occupancy whether it’s a couple or a family that will have multiple vehicles.

Population density exceeds infrastructure.

The truth is neighborhoods, streets, and highways are being congested with vehicles, and population density will continue to increase and can affect the current infrastructure. ADU regulation and zoning requirements vary from one jurisdiction to another. Homeowners must comply with local regulations and ensure the understanding of “specific regulations and requirements for ADUs” (Jones, 2023). It may seem that at one point application approval and permitting fees would stand in the way of building an ADU which allowed control from population density, but the most recent laws have made it much easier for homeowners to speed up the process.

Many housing communities in California are being run by a Homeowner Association (HOA) which is a “self-governing organization in “common-interest communities where homeowners collectively pay fees to maintain the units or neighborhood... typically run by resident homeowners, unpaid volunteers who are elected to a board of directors,” (Chang, 2022). Properties that are currently governed by HOA typically have a set of rules and bylaws that are

enforced by the association towards the community. Communities with HOAs regulate parking and structures of the townhouses or the housing community to consistently stay uniform and control the population density within a community. Through the new law, AB-670 allows for people who reside in HOA communities to construct ADUs. “Specifically, it prevents banning or unreasonably restricting single-family lots on the construction of these units. Presently, many HOAs have CCRs (“conditions, covenants and restrictions”) that prevent people from building ADUs,” (Donel, 2022).

Since 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom has signed many laws into place regarding ADUs, making ADUs more accessible for renters throughout the state. Whether owners are looking into building or looking into owning one all the changes have allowed to make it possible in a shorter timeframe. Both AB-881 and AB-68 “arguably have the most significant impact on the state’s housing market. These two bills will make California ADUs much simpler to build because it makes many of the current restrictions that cities place on ADUs obsolete,” (Donel, 2022). The bills are also important as they prohibit “any lot coverage, minimum lot size, etc. requirements that municipalities have,” (Donel, 2022). Law SB-13 in many ways is like both AB-881 and AB-68, but it ultimately reduces the fees involved in building an ADU and removes any essential regulations that were not included in bills AB-881 and AB-68.

The city’s infrastructure is being harmed by the loosening policies governing ADUs yet has anyone taken into consideration the limits to the sewer and water? Each year California faces a drought that limits people to a certain amount of water usage and exceeding the amount results in a penalty charge. Scholar MacKenzie Elmer has outlined that even though San Diegans are using less water, he predicts that the increased usage of water will increase by 10% by the

beginning of this year, also pointing out that as population density continues to increase so will the water usage will increase (Elmer, 2022).

Safety hazards in case of an emergency

Safety regulations are important in a household i.e. fire alarms, CO2 readers, sprinkler systems, etc. The HCD Accessory Dwelling Unit Handbook-California states the requirements for the safety of the occupants, whether it is fire sprinklers, or having multiple exits in case of an emergency (HCD Accessory Dwelling Unit Handbook-California). To make it easier for the development of the ADUs, Senate Bill 897 “eliminates the restriction regarding non-conforming zoning conditions, building code violations or unpermitted structures. Before SB 897, homeowners were required to have unpermitted structures brought up to current codes, which made California ADU development slower and more costly. SB 897 removes these restrictions unless the unpermitted condition is a health or safety concern,” (Ezplans, 2023). Currently, fire sprinklers are no longer required, in case of a fire emergency if the emergency response team cannot contain the fire, many neighbors including the ADU and the main dwelling can be affected.

Summary

ADUs have brought affordable housing to certain communities, but the associated issues outweigh the positive purpose of ADUs. Traffic and parking have increased since the approved laws allowed for more ADUs within residential zoning, population density has increased and affected not only the city's infrastructure but in some cases, overflowing schools, street parking, and street traffic making it difficult for residents to move swiftly or to have children attend the appropriate school within their jurisdiction. Both scholars Bert and Adair, have gone out to the public to research the effects that are trickling down as many homeowners feel the effects of the congestion of vehicles while taking away from accommodations such as parking for parks, venues, etc. Many bills have been passed making it easy for "affordable housing" units, but there are consequences that need to be addressed to avoid destroying our neighborhoods and preserving the American Dream.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

San Diego has loosened their ADU policies allowing for multiple units in one property to ease the current affordable housing crisis, which has resulted in the surfacing of a few issues that have affected overall the livelihood of many San Diego residents. The congestion of cars has congested not only residential neighborhoods, but the highways with heavy traffic throughout the day. Population density has increased as ADUs are becoming more easily obtained by homeowners seeking to build in their backyards and current renters. Certain bills have allowed for cutting corners in the construction of ADUs, by doing so sprinkler systems are not required, allowing for structures that can house up to six families which all pose a safety hazard in a due emergency. Surveying and interviewing subject matter experts on the issues that are associated with ADUs will indicate the measures being taken to ease the issues. Surveys conducted on current homeowner about their feelings and thoughts on the current ADUs law will show whether the current solution to affordable housing is working or not or if it's just destroying our current neighborhoods and the city's infrastructure with population density.

Main research questions

San Diego County has continued to allow ADU constructions, but the questions remain how can we regulate the ADU unit laws and prevent the issues that have risen, how will the neighborhoods be preserved from the overflow of cars on the streets by increasing the usage of public transportation and regulating the number of units built in one property depending on the lot and decrease the safe hazards.

Theory of Change and Assumption

If San Diego County implemented and enforced stricter regulations governing the building of ADU units in areas with residential (R) zoning

1. Then there would be less vehicle congestion for parking and traffic
2. Then population density would not exceed the infrastructure
3. Then there would be fewer safety hazards in case of an emergency

Operational Definitions

For this study, the following Operational Definitions have been found to provide a clear understanding of the terms that pertain to the study.

Accessory Dwelling Unit- For this study, accessory dwellings represent tiny homes allowed in the backyards of single-family residences; they are also referred to as ADUs. The issues associated with ADUs are how they attract individuals to move closer to their work and reduce travel, but by doing so, population density and vehicle congestion have rapidly increased.

Emergency Response- For this study, emergency response represents paramedics, firefighters, and law enforcement. It can be anyone providing aid in response to an emergency casualty. Accidents occur every day; however, as population density increases, exceeding the city infrastructure creates problems for emergency responders. Overcrowded neighborhoods can prevent first responders from acting immediately as they may have to move vehicles to have better access, or the number of people can be confused. Interviews will be conducted with police officers, paramedics, and firefighters as they explain some of the obstacles they face trying to do their job.

Population Density- For this study, population density represents the increasing population within San Diego, whether individuals are current residents or individuals moving into San Diego County. Can the infrastructure support the population density, the city has its limitations of utility usage,

and the current structures, i.e. city halls, DMVs, courthouses, jails, etc., have met their total capacity. Wait times are longer, which has created a backlog for certain services. Population density needs to be measured and kept at a limit that a city can support all around. Through the survey, population density will be measured by asking

Regulations- For this study, regulations represent the laws and/or ordinances that pertain to ADUs and the changes that can be made to the current law and/or ordinance. San Diego is becoming overcrowded as ADUs are very popular. However, regulations need to be revisited to prevent vehicle congestion and traffic, stay within the city's population density supported by the infrastructures, and lastly, for first responders to be able to do their job in a reasonable time to ensure the safety of everyone. Each will be measured by asking homeowners if they agree or disagree with current regulations that have made it easier to build ADUs.

Vehicle congestion- For this study, vehicle congestion represents the number of cars crowded in one street, parked on the street, or creating traffic. Currently, no mandated regulation requires landlords to provide off-street parking for their ADU tenants, leaving them to park on the street, cluttering neighborhoods. Makes it harder for people to have visitors over due to the lack of parking availability or as simple as going to a local restaurant that doesn't provide parking and street parking is the only option, but due to population density, most of these parking spots are being occupied by surrounding tenants.

Stricter regulation, as opposed to the current regulation, will slow down the pace at which population density has rapidly increased, and implementing restrictions on single-family residential areas will result in the preservation of neighborhoods that have been around for hundreds of years. Associated with stricter regulations, the reduction of vehicles will turn to a positive outcome. Less congestion of cars will allow for more parking and less traffic on highways,

easing the travel times for individuals on a daily commute. Population density has been steadily growing, and with that, it seems like lines at the grocery store are longer, restaurant wait times, and an increase of students in a given school zoning, which means some students may have to travel to other schools due to the population density within the zoning which is overpopulating schools leaving potential new homeowners with children having to travel a distance to drop their child off at school due to the population density that comes with ADUs and in some cases larger units that can house up six families.

Population sampling strategy

Research surveys conducted will sample 150-200 current homeowners within the Chula Vista area on their feelings about the current ADU laws and how they have changed their neighborhoods either for the better or worse. Allowing them to make comments on how they may believe the laws should change or stay the same. Likewise, interviews with subject matter experts in the fields of zoning, city planning, transportation, and affordable housing advocacy groups will be conducted on their standpoint on the subject, seeing if they are aware of the current issues that have surfaced, what and how they plan on moving forward with the solution to the issues, considering a change to current laws to preserve current neighborhoods that most homeowners are trying to preserve.

Procedures

Data will be collected through “SurveyMonkey” an online surveying website that will be posted on an app called “NextDoor”, which will be my first mode of data collection. If all fails, plan b will be conducting a door-to-door survey of 3-4 questions that I will conduct within a mile of my current address. Surveys will be deployed during the two weeks of EMPA-396. Key informant interviews will be conducted with Subject Matter Experts (SME) within the community

zoning managers, firefighters, law enforcement, and paramedics. Interviews will be conducted during the first 3 weeks of EMPA 396.

Data Processing and Analysis

As the data is collected at the end of the research phase, processing of the data and analysis will be administered in both qualitative and quantitative. A presentation of the findings will be in a statistical manner, percentages will summarize the survey result findings. Meanwhile, the interviews conducted with subject matter experts will be analyzed in a qualitative manner that will narrate the outcome while comparing the different responses from different subject experts to find connections between responses.

Internal and External Validity

Surveys will be conducted on roughly 150-200 current homeowners within residential zoning and HOA communities. The survey will measure if the homeowners are familiar with the current laws, do they agree with the changes to safety features, how has vehicle congestion impacted their neighborhoods and the daily commute, if they believe that San Diego County infrastructure can support the population density, and how these changes are affecting the emergency responders' response time due to obstacles that stand in the way. The internal validity can be affected by the outcome of the surveys as different people have different stands on whether they agree and support the current ADU laws, some may take advantage of the changes to ADUs to generate extra income and in response are in favor of ADU units and converting their garage. Such beliefs can affect the outcome of the research and question the assumptions.

Limitations

Research studies cannot be predicted, or expected and unexpected limitations can arise or be exposed throughout the collection of the data process. An expected limitation is the participation of the community in the completion of the survey, as well as the participation of subject matter experts through verbal and online interviews.

Summary

This study will use a mixed-method approach to collect all the data required for the study as it will be necessary to translate the response through quantitative and qualitative data. The study intends to identify the connections between the independent variables to the current issues associated with the loosening of the ADU regulations that can result in the reform of the current regulation to preserve residential zoning and prevent the current issues from becoming uncontrollable.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

Introduction

The research focused on determining if the current changes to the accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in San Diego contribute to vehicle congestion, exceeding San Diego's infrastructure capacity, and increasing the challenges first responders endure during an emergency. A mixed-methods research (MMR) approach was used to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected through "Survey Monkey," at the beginning of my research, I had a plan to post the survey on the NextDoor app as well as on Facebook, and had a backup plan in the case that social media failed which consisted of going door-to-door with a group of friends that would explain my survey and record each person answers.

Instead, a text message was constructed explaining the purpose of my survey. I requested each person forward the text to at least ten people and appreciated their help as I am concluding my master's degree program with their help. I also posted a QR code at work with a short paragraph explaining who I am and the purpose and importance of my survey. Surprisingly, it worked within three days; I hit my goal of 200 surveys.

A six-question interview was conducted along with a consent form, allowing me to record their answers. The interviews were administered to local police officers, paramedics, and firefighters. The survey and interview questions addressed the three assumptions: congestion of vehicles that contribute to less parking and an increase in traffic, San Diego's infrastructure cannot support the increase in population density, and the obstacles emergency response faces during an emergency. The following is a comprehensive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collection during the study.

Assumption #1

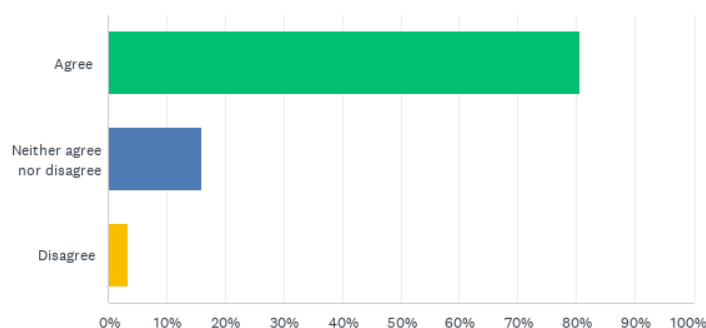
If San Diego County implemented and enforced stricter regulations governing the building of ADU units in residential (R) zoning, there would be less vehicle congestion for parking and traffic.

Quantitative Results

The survey contained two questions, five and six, addressing the current vehicle congestion, either agreeing or disagreeing that current ADU policies have contributed to vehicle congestion. Figure 1 demonstrates that out of 200 people who took the survey, 80.50% agreed that vehicle congestion has increased in residential neighborhoods after the current changes to the ADU policies, making it easier for homeowners to build ADUs in their backyard. While 16% could neither agree nor disagree with the current vehicle congestion linked to the policy changes.

Figure 1: Quantitative Analysis

Q5 Do you think vehicle congestion has increased in single-residential neighborhoods since the ADU policies changed?

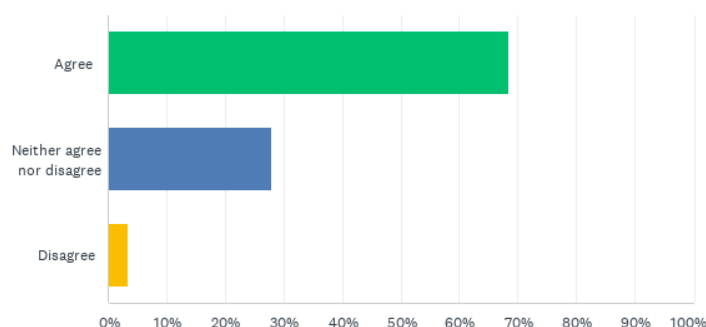


In addition, in response to question six, 68.50% of the respondents agreed that vehicle congestion due to the ADU policy changes has contributed to the daily traffic in San Diego County, as shown in Figure 2. The finding insinuates that as policies change to find the correct solution to

affordable housing, vehicle congestion is increasing the daily traffic within the city, which takes longer for many to get from one place to another. According to a group of researchers at San Diego University in an article about “Traffic Congestion,” indicated that “traffic congestion has a broader societal impact, increasing travel time and fuel costs, and negatively affecting the environment and public health” (*Traffic congestion – school of leadership and education sciences – university of san diego*). According to the same article, San Diego County drivers can spend more than 12 million hours on highways due to delays, which has increased by 75% since 2019 (*Traffic Congestion – School of Leadership and Education Sciences – University of San Diego*).

Figure 2: Quantitative Analysis

Q6 Do you think current ADU policies have contributed to daily traffic in San Diego County?



Qualitative Results

The key informant interviews comprised of seven questions were distributed among six local first responders, two police officers, two paramedics, and two firefighters. The interview contained two questions, one and two, that focused on the current vehicle congestion and associated difficulties that prevent them from doing their job on time. The first question for the qualitative data is, “Current ADU policies in San Diego County are creating vehicle congestion. How does this impact your response time on an emergency call?” there were many similarities to

the responses. The theme focus is on the extra vehicles that ADU occupants bring. Depending on how many people live in the unit, it can be anywhere from one to two extra vehicles. Key informant one said, “Vehicle congestion has increased our response time, and trying to figure out how to navigate through traffic has been a bit difficult” (Key informant one). Meanwhile, another respondent said, “Fires occur at any time of the day; moving fast and weaving in and out of traffic without causing more accidents can be a bit challenging. Traffic is a major factor in getting to where we need to, then once at the destination, working around a neighborhood full of vehicles is challenging” (Key informant five).

Like question one, question two addresses how the current vehicle congestion has hindered emergency response from providing the proper aid in either a residential neighborhood or in a car accident. San Diego County is a highly popular city that attracts many tourists for its beaches, military bases, restaurants, and overall nice weather all year round. More recently, the current affordable housing solution through ADUs is attracting people to the city. The outcome of the question revealed that traffic is the most probable cause to hinders them from responding adequately to the needs of others. Most of the key informants said that traffic was hard to get around, and during an accident, it was difficult to get to the scene as many people did not follow the proper protocols when they saw and heard the lights and sirens. Overall, most of the interviewees believe that there should be less vehicle congestion in San Diego. Having stricter ADU policies it can help mitigate the current issue at hand.

Findings

The quantitative finding revealed the new ADU laws contribute to vehicle congestion. People being surveyed suggested that only neighborhoods are being congested by vehicles, but traffic in San Diego has increased drastically since the ADU policies have changed. Most of the

people surveyed have indicated that there has been an increase in vehicle congestion in residential neighborhoods. However, the qualitative data also supported assumption one. The key informants all had similar responses to each other. One key informant pointed out that during their training, they were not trained on navigating alternate routes or what to do if vehicles were completely blocking them. Needless to say, assumption one was supported by both the people being surveyed and the key informants.

Assumption #2

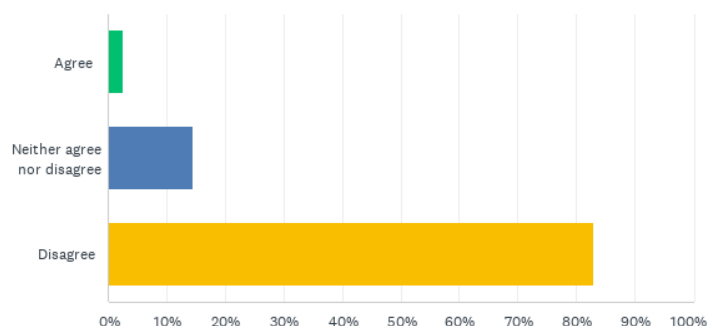
If San Diego County implemented and enforced stricter regulations governing the building of ADU units in residential (R) zoning, then population density would not exceed infrastructure.

Quantitative Results

The survey contained two questions, seven and eight, that addressed whether the people surveyed agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed or disagreed completely. Figure three validates assumption two: stricter policies will decrease the rapid increase in population density, which will not allow the city's infrastructure to exceed its capacity. The survey revealed that 83% of the people surveyed disagreed with the statement that currently, San Diego's infrastructure can support the increase of population density. Only 14.50% of people surveyed could neither agree nor disagree. “San Diego’s Smart Growth Solution” an article points out that as San Diego is known to many as America’s Finest City due to its many attributes, it is becoming a top destination for both homebuyers and businesses, and the population of the region is expected to surge 33% in the next 30 years. Suggesting that the “already-strained infrastructure currently in place is in no way prepared to support the expected growth” (Findentcapital, 2016).

Figure 3: Quantitative Analysis

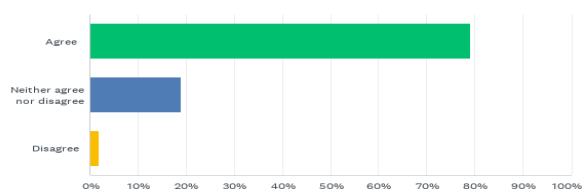
Q7 Do you think San Diego's infrastructure can support the increasing growth of population density?



As in question seven, the majority of the people surveyed agreed that San Diego's infrastructure could not support the increase in population density; Figure 4 displays the responses for question 8, indicating that 79% agreed that San Diego's ADU policies are overcrowding San Diego County. While comparing both questions, it seems that while most of the same individuals agreed that San Diego's infrastructure cannot support the rise of population density, 4% did not agree the current policies are overcrowding San Diego County. Instead, 19% answered they could neither agree nor disagree with San Diego County being overcrowded.

Figure 4: Quantitative Analysis

Q8 Have you felt like the current ADU policies are overcrowding San Diego County?



Qualitative Results

Questions three and four of the interviews relate to how San Diego County currently exceeds the population density. Question three asked, “From a law enforcement/first responder point of view, do you think the city’s infrastructure can continue to support the increase in population? And why?” key informants were divided; about half agreed, and the others disagreed. The three key informants agreed that San Diego's infrastructure could not support the increase in population due to the inability to maintain adequate housing for everyone on the spectrum.

Key informant six said, “The city cannot accommodate the number of people without us living like most of these third world countries. Instead of having single-family residences, they have sky-high apartment complexes with hundreds of families living in one building” (Key Informant six). Meanwhile, another informant replied, “The city infrastructure could support the increasing population if there were more apartment complexes to take into consideration the different income levels. However, with a correct plan and a good public transportation system, it can be accomplished while mitigating other issues that arise, i.e., less traffic and fewer vehicles per household” (Key Informant five).

Century 21 Award UC/La Jolla Realtor Linda Bernstein recounted that as a realtor and a resident of San Diego, she had sold many homes, the enormous density that the city is proposing to create has caused uncertainty, and she no longer can guarantee her clients a friendly, low-crime, family-oriented neighborhood that would offer them a desirable lifestyle (Schwab, 2022).

Question four relates to question three, which asked key informants, “As population density continues to grow, are there any safety issues that can affect the city as it is becoming overcrowded?” all the interviewees had similar answers. Each had their reasonings, but overall, are concerned with not only the number of individuals living in one property but the safety of

bystanders who may be affected. A respondent said it took them 30 minutes from the moment they got a call to arrive a mile away. Once there, he said, “The number of bystanders we have because they either want to record what is happening or just standing around to get the neighborly gossip usually stand in our way, more than we would want” (Key informant three).

Population growth only means more usage of water, electricity, and sewer. The city cannot accommodate one of the key informants who mentioned his fear that the electricity grid may not support the usage of electricity. Some ADUs may cut corners in doing things, not using the correct supplies to run wiring for electricity.

Findings

The survey and interviews support the assumption that San Diego County is overcrowded and cannot support the increasing infrastructure. The concern for the infrastructure seems to be a hot topic. A current homeowner from San Diego, Carlos Arteaga, said he is concerned that developers are outbidding families to create apartment-style buildings with units that are too small on overcrowded lots (Aere & Dulaney, 2022). Developers are taking over the infrastructure of San Diego; meanwhile, the general population and key informants are left to deal with the current issues.

Assumption #3

If San Diego County implemented and enforced stricter regulations governing the building of ADU units in residential (R) zoning, there would be fewer safety hazards in an emergency.

Quantitative Results

The survey consisted of two questions, three and nine, concerning safety hazards in an emergency and the ADU policies that govern the safety features required in multi-family units like apartments. Both of the questions were related to safety, the changes done to the policies allowing

people to get away with not having to install sprinkler systems or any safety features, and whether first responders currently have a hard time doing their jobs due to vehicle congested neighborhoods. Question 3's answers differed slightly from most; 41% of people surveyed indicated they were somewhat familiar with current laws. Meanwhile, 12% were extremely familiar, and 26.5% were very familiar, as shown in Figure 5.

Individuals need to be aware of the current laws as they can also pertain to their safety. In this instance, not knowing the changes being done can only mean that in an emergency, the absence of safety features in an ADU can cause more harm to the property and the surrounding neighbors. Figure 6 identifies that 93% of the people surveyed agree that first responders have a difficult time doing their due diligence when neighborhoods are congested with vehicles as they have to either work around them or move them to be able to have the required access to execute everything safely and promptly with little no further discrepancies.

Figure 5: Quantitative Analysis

Q3 Are you familiar with the current ADU policies that waive safety requirements?

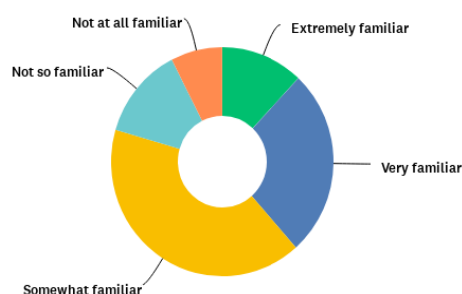
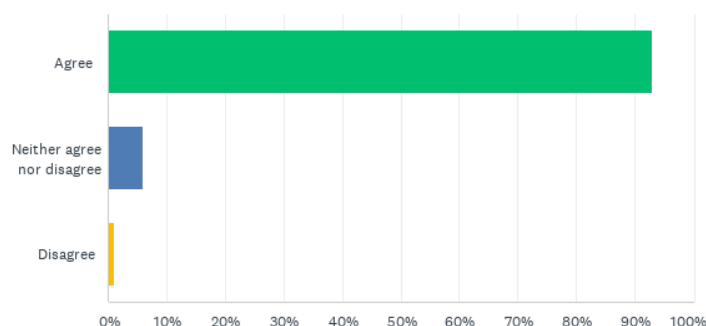


Figure 6: Congestion of Vehicle

Q9 Do you think first responders have a difficult time doing their duties quickly and safely if the streets are congested with vehicles?



Qualitative Results

Questions five and six of the interviews relate to the safety hazards that can occur with the loosened ADUs. As fewer safety features are required for ADUs, vehicle congestion on and off the highway has impacted first responders in several ways: longer commute time to assist in an emergency and having to redirect bystanders. Question five asked, “Currently, the city of San Diego is fining paramedic companies that are not responding 24 minutes; do you think there is another approach instead of fining paramedics for the problems created by the current ADU policies as they increase the population density?”. Most of the respondents do not agree with the harsh fines being issued to the paramedic companies for not making it to their destination in the desired time. One respondent suggested that officials should go back and reevaluate their current laws, what is making response time longer, and how the new laws on ADUs motivate developers to outbid families looking to purchase their own homes and build multiple units in one property rather than building in an empty lot that would allow them to build adequate parking.

Additionally, question six of the interview asked, “During a fire incident in a single-family property with multiple ADUs, the absence of safety features, i.e., sprinkler systems and fire alarms, due to several bills, some of the features are waived and do not require illegal ADUs to be brought up to par with regulations of safety features. Do you agree with skipping safety precautions that can assist in preventing issues? Please explain.” Key respondent six said, “The absence of safety features is a safety hazard...Sprinkler systems, fire alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors are there for a reason as a precautionary measure to advise individuals to vacate because they are in danger” (Key Informant six). Most ADUs house families with children or older people; these safety precautions can save a life or two. ADU inspection needs to be thorough before the city allows a homeowner or a developer to build an ADU on their property. Overall, safety should be a priority for everyone.

Findings

The survey and interviews both supported the assumption that if San Diego County implemented and enforced stricter regulations governing the building of ADU units in residential (R) zoning, there would be fewer safety hazards in an emergency. Most individuals agree that San Diego needs stricter regulations about safety features in ADUs. Lawmakers need to evaluate the effects of skipping steps and allowing the construction of ADUs without such safety features that will prevent accidents from occurring and maintain the safety of the public and residential zoning.

Summary

The data analysis revealed that a sample of San Diego County homeowners do not agree with the current ADU laws and have seen a change in vehicle congestion, an increase in population density, and safety concerns that will prevent first responders from performing their duties in an acceptable timeframe that will ensure a successful outcome with the safety of the community. At

the same time, people need to be informed of the new laws, and the survey revealed that a little more than half were somewhat familiar with the new regulations. After analyzing all the data, it was interesting to see that 72.50% of the survey participants were females between the ages of 35-44.

Interviews from key informants strongly agreed and supported the assumption that San Diego is becoming congested with vehicles as the new ADU laws attract homeowners and developers. There was a mixed feeling among the key informants on whether the infrastructure could support the population density. Still, there should be programs that could glamorize public transportation and would lessen vehicle congestion. Also, a suggestion is that building new developments in lots that can house a parking garage would be ideal instead of off-street parking in residential zoning. Lastly, it is safe to say that the law should change in favor of safety features in an ADU. They would help prevent emergencies and possibly save lives.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Areas of Further Research

Introduction

This research study intended to evaluate if the current ADU laws in San Diego County are causing vehicle congestion, increasing population density, and creating safety hazards that could've been avoided. The research on a small sample of residents demonstrated that San Diego County residents are not well informed of the current ADU laws but have seen a consistent change in vehicle congestion on and off the highway and throughout residential neighborhoods.

However, lawmakers favor ADUs as the solution to the affordable housing crisis since it affects San Diego County communities. Population density is drastically increasing, and the city's infrastructure cannot support the fast pace. It was demonstrated through qualitative research and quantitative interviews conducted with law enforcement officers, firefighters, and paramedics, who all responded with how the population density has created obstacles that they need to overcome to ensure the safety of their crew and the community. Altogether, the laws were designed to facilitate commutes for low-income families that cannot afford to live in San Diego.

Previous laws required homeowners to install fire sprinklers in their primary residence if they were to build an ADU. As of January 1st, 2023, the new changes eliminate mandatory fire sprinklers in ADUs. Such a feature can prevent fires from spreading and causing damage to surrounding properties. The research demonstrated that the potential for safety hazards is hazardous if these features are revoked. Cutting corners can result in ADU blueprints not being constructed correctly.

The research sub-questions for the study were evaluated and have found that San Diego County is destroying single-family homes by allowing developers to outbid and convert the properties into small communities without being held liable for providing off-street parking, as

well as current homeowners who are creating ADUs to make extra income and are not supporting their tenant by providing off-street parking. Furthermore, the study only suggests that at this rate, San Diego County will mimic third-world countries filled with multi-family complexes, and single-family residential zoning will cease to exist.

Recommendation One

Just as governing policies have made it easier for homeowners to build ADU units in their backyard, legislators should impose a regulation that homeowners are responsible for providing private parking for their tenants without having street parking as an option. Many homes have a two-car garage; instead of allowing them to convert it into an ADU unit, it should be used as car storage, enabling the tenants to use the driveway. If that is an issue, many homes have a big enough front yard to be paved out to support parking for their tenants. This will help with the congestion within neighborhoods. Legislators allowed for the creation of ADU units with the idea that many tenants would use public transportation often. However, this was not the case, but maybe reevaluating incentives to promote public transportation. The city should provide programs that encourage people to use the services through bonuses or by participating in programs that track public transportation usage.

Recommendation Two

San Diego should consider San Francisco's Homeward Bound Program, which was started roughly a decade ago by Governor Newsom, the city's mayor, to offer paid travel to people who are homeless to a location with a support system. The program has met an abundance of criticism due to many people utilizing the program returning to homelessness in San Francisco. Mike Baker of the New York Times interview with city officials revealed that "Within a year, the city found that one out of every eight bus ticket recipients had returned and sought services in San Francisco

once again” (Baker, 2019, para. 6). Although this program may not be the answer to homelessness that San Francisco was looking for, it is an exciting option if coupled with another states’ relocation incentive program. Imagine living in San Diego and accepting a teleworking position in a central southern California metropolitan area, having air or bus travel paid for by the city of origin, and receiving a relocation incentive payment of thousands of dollars from the new destination city. A person or family could move from a modest 2-bedroom apartment lifestyle in, say, National City, for example, to more than a 2000 sqft home with a large lot in a state like West Virginia for a drastically smaller rent or mortgage amount and the same pay that they would receive living in the city of San Diego.

Recommendation Three

Lawmakers should re-evaluate current safety regulations associated with ADUs instead of holding first responders accountable for being unable to meet a timeline. The current regulations should be changed to force homeowners and developers to install the required safety features to prevent the expansion of emergencies in the case of a fire. ADU inspections should be thorough to guarantee that tenants and surrounding neighbors if the inspection is up to par with the safety features, a tax break or some incentive should be issued to the homeowner or developer of the property.

Table One: SMART criteria for reaching recommendation

	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2	Recommendation 3
Specific	Legislators, local government officials, and zoning managers should require homeowners and developers to provide off-street parking for ADU tenants.	San Diego County should consider San Francisco's Homeward Program in conjunction with teleworking positions to relocate individuals.	Legislators should reevaluate the current changes to the safety regulations, that waive safety features.
Measurable	Legislators, local government officials, and zoning managers need to reevaluate the current laws and measure the effectiveness of not requiring parking assigned parking.	San Diego County officials should develop a program that will allow individuals to obtain teleworking jobs with San Diego pay allowing them to relocate in a more affordable state.	San Diego officials should measure the current changes that waive safety features and its effect on an emergency.
Achievable	Collaboration between legislators, local government officials, zoning managers, and homeowners/developers to come up with a solution.	Collaboration between local officials and teleworking employers to develop a plan that will allow local pay and relocation.	Collaboration between legislators and first responders to deploy a plan to ensure safety features are in each ADU.
Relevant	Directly supports assumption one of the research.	Directly supports assumption two of the research	Directly supports assumption three of the research
Time Bound	Mandating off-street parking within a year.	Within 12-18 months to develop a plan and measure its success.	Six months to develop a plan and measure its success.

Further research topics

1. Legislators favor ADUs and remain hopeful that the population will utilize public transportation instead of personal vehicles. Further studies can explain why people fail to use public transportation services.
2. The effects endured by the utility companies with the increase of population density.
3. Homeowner associations are in place to regulate housing communities, with the changing laws on ADUs that overthrow HOA policies. Research can be done on how HOAs are dealing with such changes. Will these housing communities cease to exist?

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APPENDIX A: Quantitative Data Collection Instrument

1. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other (Specify) _____

2. Please select the one that best describes your age:

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ 65+

3. Are you familiar with the current ADU policies?

☐ Extremely familiar

☐ Very familiar

☐ Somewhat familiar

☐ Not at all familiar

4. Do you think the current ADU policies are the solution to the problems going on with the housing crisis?

☐ Agree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Disagree

5. Do you think vehicle congestion has increased in single-residential neighborhoods since the ADU policies changed?

☐ Agree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

___ Disagree

6. Do you think current ADU policies have contributed to daily traffic in San Diego County?

___ Agree

___ Neither agree or disagree

___ Disagree

7. Do you think San Diego's infrastructure can support the increasing growth of population density?

___ Agree

___ Neither agree or disagree

___ Disagree

8. Have you felt like the current ADU policies are overcrowding San Diego County?

___ Agree

___ Neither agree or disagree

___ Disagree

9. Do you think first responders have a difficult time doing their duties quickly and safely if the streets are congested with vehicles?

___ Agree

___ Neither agree or disagree

___ Disagree

APPENDIX B: Qualitative Data Collection Instrument

1. Current ADU policies in San Diego County are creating vehicle congestion. How does this impact your response time on an emergency call?
2. Has the current congestion of vehicles hindered you at a location from performing emergency response, either in a car accident or in a residential neighborhood?
3. From a law enforcement/first responder point of view, do you think the city's infrastructure continues to support the increase in population? And why?
4. As population density continues to grow, are there any safety issues that can affect the city as it is becoming overcrowded?
5. Currently, the city of San Diego is fining paramedic companies that are not responding within 24 minutes; do you think there is another approach instead of fining paramedics for the problems created by the current ADU policies as they increase the population density?
6. During a fire incident in a single-family property with multiple ADUs, the absence of safety features i.e., sprinkler systems and fire alarms, due to a number of bills, some of the features are waived and do not require illegal ADUs to be brought up to par with the regulations of safety features. Do you agree with skipping safety precautions that can assist in preventing issues? Please explain.

Interview Protocol

My name is Suni Lopez, currently, I am working on my final research project to conclude my Masters in Public Administration. Before we begin, here is the consent, if you can please read and sign it. If you have any questions before we proceed, please let me know.

If there are no questions at this time, we will advance to the next step. Today's interview can last anywhere from 30-45 minutes. Which I will be recording to keep the accuracy of your answers. In conjunction with the recording, I will be taking notes to supplement key discussion points. Do I have your authorization to record the audio? If so, thank you for your consent, and let's begin our interview.

Today is _____ (date and time), I am speaking with _____. I will be conducting an interview with general, specific, and follow-up questions. At any time if you feel uncomfortable answering a question, we can skip the question and move on to the next one.

APPENDIX C: Gantt Chart

	Week 1 (Mon-Sun)	Week 2 (Mon-Sun)	Week 3 (Mon-Sun)	Week 4 (Mon-Sun)	Week 5 (Mon-Sun)	Week 6 (Mon-Sun)	Week 7 (Mon-Sun)	Week 7.5 (Mon-Sun)
Reading and Research								
Survey and Interview								
Creating Data and Collecting Tools								
Distribute Survey and Conduct Interviews								
Receive Survey and Interview Feedback								
Data, Survey, and Interview Analysis								
Presentation of Results								