

# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Development Services Department



## Policy AG.37 Guide to Accessory Dwelling Units

### What is an accessory dwelling unit (ADU)?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is defined in Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC 21.05.050D.1.a) as:

*“An additional dwelling unit added to, created within, or detached from dwelling on a parcel, which provides basic requirements for living, sleeping, cooking, and sanitation. The unit may have a separate exterior entrance or an entrance to an internal common area accessible to the outside.”*

### Where are ADUs allowed?

#### Anchorage Bowl (AMC 21.05.060D.1.):

- **Zones:** ADUs are allowed in all residential and commercial zones wherever there is another dwelling.
- **Size:** ADUs may be either 40% of the primary structure or 900 square feet, whichever is larger, up to a maximum of 1200 square feet. (See graphics at the end of this document)
- **Height:** Maximum height of a detached ADU is 25 feet, unless an ADU is over a garage in which case it is 30 feet.
- **Setbacks:** ADUs are subject to the same setback restrictions as the principal structure in a zone except that an ADU may encroach into the side or rear setback abutting an alley. Detached accessory units taller than 15 feet shall adhere to a 10-foot side setback abutting a neighboring R-1 or R-1A lot.
- **Owner Occupancy:** Owner occupancy is not required.

#### Chugiak-Eagle River (AMC 21.10.050H.1.):

- **Zones:** ADUs are allowed in all residential districts, except for the CE-R-3 district. In CE-R-1 and CE-R-1A districts, the ADU must be attached to the single-family structure.
- **Size:** ADUs may be up to 1,000 square feet or 40% of the gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit, whichever is larger. Above a certain square footage, this 40% rule becomes the only limitation on size. (See graphics at the end of this document)
- **Height:** Detached ADUs shall not exceed the height of the principal structure.
- **Setbacks:** Setbacks are the same as those of the underlying district.
- **Owner Occupancy:** Owner occupancy is not required.
- **Access:** ADUs shall share a common driveway with the principal dwelling unit or have access from an alley.

#### Girdwood (AMC 21.09.050C.2.a.):

- **Zones:**

- **Residential:** Only one accessory dwelling unit, as defined in section 21.05.070D., shall be allowed on any single-family residential lot. The accessory dwelling unit may be a rental unit. Accessory Dwelling Units are not allowed in the gR-5 zoning district per Table 21.09-3.
- **Commercial:** gC-3, gC-4, gC-6
- **Resort:** gRST-1, gRST-2
- **Size:** ADUs shall be no larger than 900 square feet. (See graphics at the end of this document)
- **Height:** Accessory Dwelling Units shall not exceed 35 feet in height, nor be greater than twice the height of the primary dwelling unit
- **Setbacks:** The side and rear setback flexibility allowed in Table 21.09-5 shall not apply to accessory units taller than 15 feet.
- **Owner Occupancy:** Owner occupancy is not required.
- **Bedrooms:** ADUs may not have more than 2 bedrooms.

### Applying for an ADU permit:

When applying for an ADU permit, the landowner must obtain a building or land use permit from the Development Services Department prior to construction of the ADU.

1. Check through this handout to make sure you understand and meet all the requirements for the type of ADU you wish to build.
2. Look at Building Safety Handout R.01 for permit submittal requirements ([www.muni.org/bsd](http://www.muni.org/bsd), then click the Handouts link).
3. Bring the submittal requirements to the Building Safety Department at 4700 Elmore Road. Fill out the permit application and pay the applicable building or land use permit fees.
4. Building plans are reviewed and when they are approved, a building permit will be issued. After you pick up your permit, construction can begin.

### Other things you should know...

- For purposes of securing financing, potential owners may request and receive a letter of pre-approval from the Municipality indicating the property is eligible for an ADU permit, if the potential owner completes the application process and construction in accordance with municipal code. Contact the Land Use Review Division at 343-8380 for more information.
- Approval of the ADU expires when:
  - The ADU is altered and is no longer in conformance with municipal code or
  - The ADU is abandoned by the owner through written notification to the Municipality on a form provided by the Municipality.

### Where to obtain the ADU Zoning Regulations

This handout is advisory only. The complete text of the ADU regulations may be found in three sections of Anchorage Municipal Code: 21.05 (Anchorage/Turnagain Arm), 21.09 (Girdwood), 21.10 (Chugiak-Eagle River) available online at: [www.muni.org](http://www.muni.org) (click on “Zoning, Regs & Codes” located under the “Business” tab.) For additional questions regarding zoning regulations for ADUs, please call the Land Use Plan Review Section at 343-8380.

### Building Code Regulations for Establishing an ADU

Under the International Residential Code (IRC), attached dwelling units require a one-hour fire separation and sound attenuating construction between the units. Dwelling units cannot share a forced air heating system per the International Mechanical Code (IMC) and International Fuel Gas Code (IFGC). Per the National Electrical Code (NEC), each dwelling unit requires a separate electrical panel supplying all circuits within the unit so that occupants in each dwelling have ready access to over-current devices. These requirements can be onerous when adding a dwelling unit to an existing single-family home or duplex. One can however establish an ADU without meeting these requirements if the ADU *communicates freely* with the adjacent dwelling unit.

AMC 23.85.R302.3 - *Two-family and three-unit dwellings*. Under AO No. 2023-130(S) The following statement is added to IRC section R302.3:

A detached single family or two-family dwelling unit with an ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) is considered to be a two-family or three-unit dwelling, as the case may be, unless the ADU communicates freely with the single-family or one of the two-family dwelling units.

***Communicates freely*** means a permanent opening with or without a door allowing free internal passage between the ADU and an adjacent dwelling unit.

A dwelling unit with a freely communicating ADU is considered to be a single dwelling unit and AMC Title 23 building code requirements specific to two-family dwellings do not apply. The required smoke detectors must be interconnected in accordance with the IRC to simultaneously alarm within the ADU and adjacent dwelling unit. The occupants in the ADU and adjacent dwelling unit must have continuous ready access to the over-current devices (electrical panel) serving all circuits within their dwelling unit. If access between the ADU and adjacent dwelling unit is restricted by installing locking hardware on the door intended to provide free internal passage, each dwelling unit must be wired such that the occupants have ready access to their over-current devices (electrical panel) at all times.

### **Two- and three-family Dwellings**

If it is desired to achieve an AMC Title 23 building code compliant two or three dwelling unit building, the following information applies.

#### **Electrical:**

- Each occupant shall have ready access to all over current devices supplying that unit. (*NEC 240-24(B)*).
- Branch circuits required for the purpose of lighting, central alarm, signal, communications, or other needs for public or common areas of a two- or three-family dwelling shall not be supplied from equipment that supplies only an individual dwelling unit (*NEC 210-25(B)*).
- Branch circuits in each dwelling unit shall supply only loads within that unit or loads associated with that unit. (*NEC 210.25 (A)*)

#### **Mechanical:**

- Return air from one dwelling unit shall not be discharged into another dwelling unit. (*2018 IFGC section 618.5 and 2018 IMC sections 403.2.1 and 601.5*)

**Plumbing:**

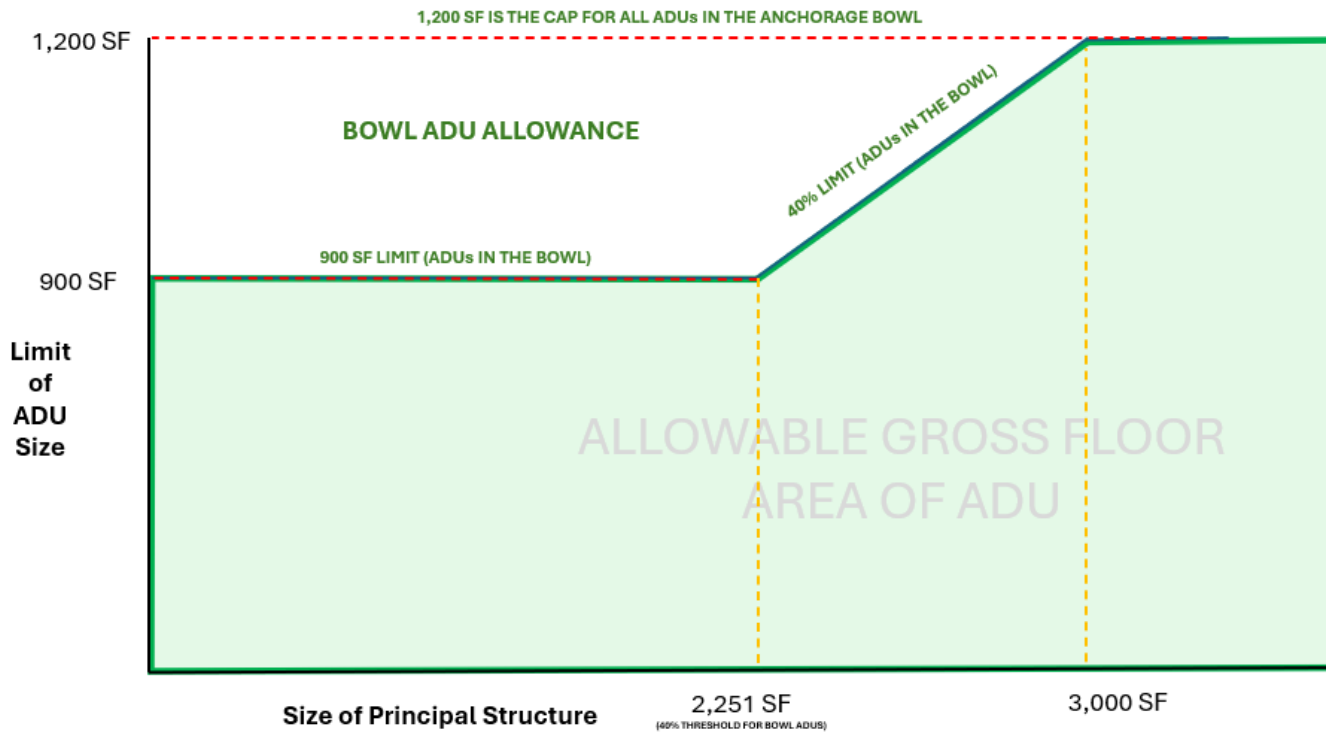
- In multi-dwelling units, one (1) or more shutoff valves shall be provided in each dwelling unit so as the water supply to the entire dwelling unit can be shut off without stopping water supply to other units. These valves shall be accessible in the dwelling units they control. Shutoff valves shall be visible and shall not exceed ten (10) feet from a crawl space access when the shut off valves are located in a crawl space. (2018 UPC 23.25.606.3)

For additional information please call the Municipal Development Services Department at 907-343-8211.

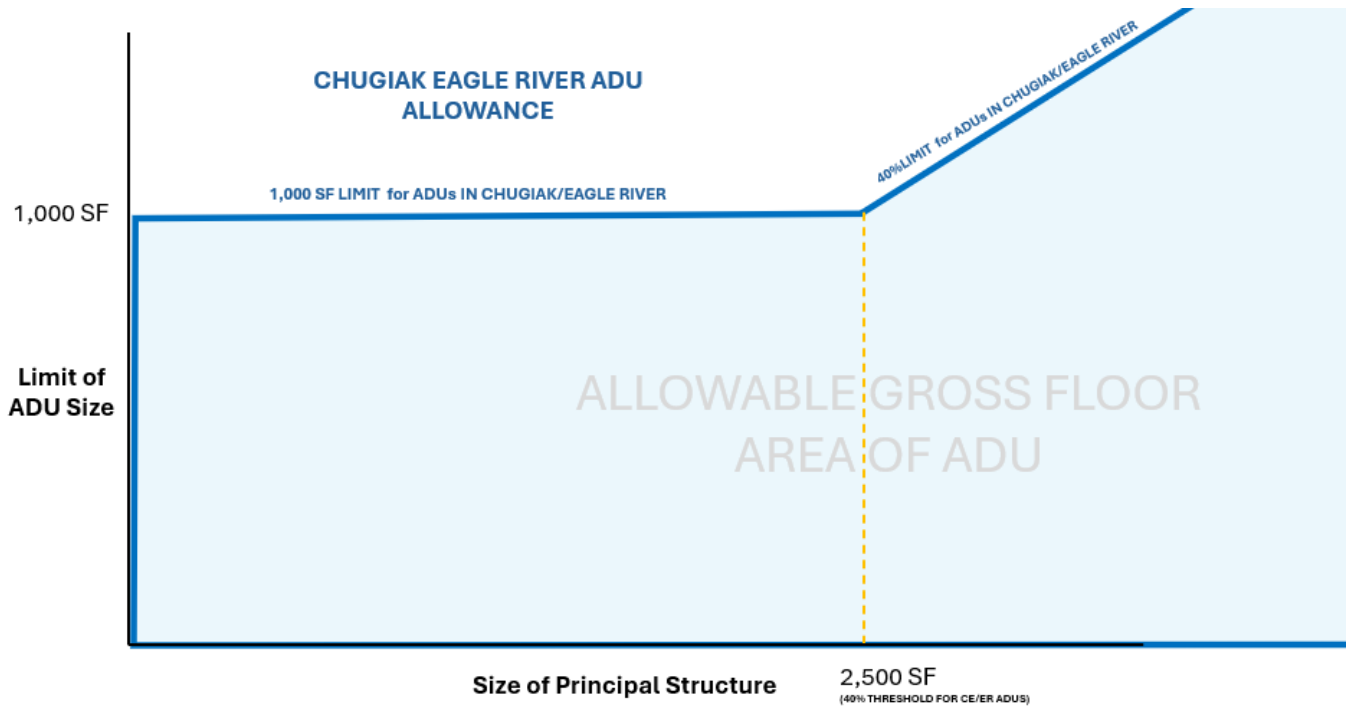
*Ross Noffsinger*  
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Ross Noffsinger, Acting Building Official  
April 10, 2024  
(Ref: 19-02, 20-11, 22-01, 23-08)

**ADU Square Footage Allowance Diagrams:**

Anchorage Bowl



Chugiak/Eagle River



Girdwood

