What is an accessory dwelling unit (ADU)?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is defined in Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) as:

- “… a subordinate dwelling unit added to, created within, or detached from a single-family residence, 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.” (AMC 21.05.070D.1.a)
- “… are compatible with the appearance and character of the principal residence, lot, and neighborhood;” (AMC 21.05.070D.1.b.iii.A.1)
- “… are smaller in size than the principal dwelling on the lot, and preserve underlying lot coverage limits;” (AMC 21.05.070D.1.b.iii.A.2)

They are also known as ‘mother-in-law apartments,’ ‘accessory apartments,’ or ‘second units.’
Where are ADU’s allowed?

**Anchorage Bowl:** All residential zoning districts in the Anchorage Bowl allow one detached ADU to accompany a single-family home. The ADU may be attached to or created within a single-family structure if it is the only principal structure on the lot.

**Chugiak-Eagle River:** ADU’s are allowed in all residential districts in Chugiak-Eagle River, with the exception of the CE-R-3 district. In CE-R-1 and CE-R-1A districts, the ADU must be attached to the single-family structure.

**Girdwood:** The following Girdwood zoning districts allow ADU’s:
- **Residential:** gR-1, gR-2, gR-2A, gR-3, gR-4
- **Commercial:** gC-3, gC-4, gC-6
- **Resort:** gRST-1, gRST-2

In Girdwood, ADU’s must be attached to the single-family structure unless the lot is 16,800 square feet or greater.

**Zoning Rules for Establishing an ADU**
- An ADU may exist only in conjunction with a detached single-family home that is the only principal structure on a lot.
- An ADU may have no more than two bedrooms.
- In class A districts, the gross floor area of the ADU, not including any related garage, shall be no greater than 900 square feet or 75 percent of the total gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit (excluding the ADU and garages), whichever is less.
- In class B districts, the gross floor area of the ADU, not including any related garage, shall be not greater than 900 square feet or 35 percent of the total gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit (excluding the ADU and garages), whichever is greater.
- The ADU shall have no more than two bedrooms.

**Girdwood Zoning Rules for Establishing an ADU**
- Except for in Girdwood, one additional off-street parking space must be provided beyond what is required for the home. When approved by the municipal traffic engineer, the one off-street parking space may be provided on-street. If the occupant of the ADU intends not to own and/or operate a vehicle, the occupant may sign the “No Car Covenant” which will remain on file with the Land Use Review Section. If the lot already has the number of spaces required for the house and the ADU, an additional space need not be added. There shall be no fewer than three parking spaces per lot.
- In Girdwood, in addition to the parking requirements for the principal dwelling unit, one off-street parking space shall be provided for each accessory dwelling unit of 600 square feet or less, and two off-street parking spaces shall be provided for an accessory dwelling unit larger than 600 sq. ft.
- In Girdwood, an accessory dwelling unit may be used as a bed and breakfast room, but the bed and breakfast facility is then limited to only one guest room, the accessory dwelling unit.

**Which “district” am I in?**
If you are unsure of whether or not you live in a Class A or a Class B district, please call the Planning Department to ask!

(907) 343-7900
Two Types of ADU

1. Internal Conversion of a Single-Family Home
   - SIZE: In class A districts (see AMC 21.08.050B.), the gross floor area of the ADU, not including any related garage, shall be no greater than 900 square feet or 75% of the total gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit (excluding the ADU and garages), whichever is less.
   - In the class B districts, the gross floor area of the ADU, not including any related garage, shall be no greater than 900 square feet or 35% of the total gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit (excluding the ADU and garages), whichever is greater.
   - Girdwood allows an ADU to be up to 50% of the gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit with a maximum size of 600 sq feet or 750 square feet, depending on lot size.
   - In Chugiak-Eagle River, the gross floor area of an ADU (excluding a garage) shall not exceed 40% of the gross floor area of the principal dwelling (excluding any garage), but shall not be greater than 1,000 square feet on lots of one acre or greater.
   - APPEARANCE: The outside entry door to the ADU may not face a street, unless no other entry door exists on that side of the house.

2. Detached ADU
   - An ADU detached from the single-family home is permitted in all zoning districts where ADUs are allowed, except that detached ADU’s taller than 15 feet shall be setback 10 feet from a side lot line abutting a lot zoned R-1 and R-1A. The structure must be at least 40 feet from lot lines abutting a street, or at least ten feet behind the street-facing façade of the principal dwelling.
   - The detached ADU/garage structure may be no more than 25 feet in height, except in Chugiak-Eagle River where detached ADUs shall not exceed the height of the principal structure.
   - ADUs in the Chugiak-Eagle River area shall use a common driveway with the principal dwelling unit or have access from an alley.

The size and appearance requirements of an ADU built as an addition (Section 2 above) also apply to detached ADUs.

Applying for an ADU permit:

When applying for an ADU permit, the land owner must obtain a building or land use permit from the Development Services Department for an ADU. Additionally, the land owner must submit an affidavit on a form provided by the municipality affirming that at least one land owner will reside in either the main home or the ADU for more than six months of each year.

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, 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. Go to the Land Use Review section at 4700 Elmore Road, sign the Accessory Dwelling Unit Affidavit of Owner-Occupancy form, and pay the $112.50 processing fee. This document is recorded and filed as a deed restriction with the Anchorage Recording District after the building/land use permit is approved.
5. 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;
  - The property ceases to maintain the required off-street parking spaces for the accessory and/or principal dwelling units;
  - The owner of the property does not reside in either the principal or the ADU for at least six months of each year;
  - The ADU is abandoned by the owner through written notification to the Municipality on a form provided by the Municipality; or
  - The property changes ownership.
- If you purchase a home with an ADU, you have 30 days from the date of transfer of ownership to file an Affidavit of Owner-Occupancy with the Municipal Planning Department and pay the $112.50 processing fee.

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: 21.05.070D.1. (Anchorage/Turnagain Arm), 21.09.050C.2. (Girdwood), 21.10.050H.1. (Chugiak-Eagle River) available online at: [www.muni.org](http://www.muni.org) (click on “Zoning, Regs & Codes” located under the “Business” tab.) And 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

To ensure that the dwellings meet appropriate health and fire safety standards, an ADU is required to be built to the adopted Municipal building code standards for two-family dwellings. (21.05.070D.1.b.iii.(5)). To change an existing single-family home into an ADU will usually require changes to the existing electrical, plumbing, and mechanical installations. Since Building Safety does not do plan review on electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems for single- and two-family homes, the permit holder is advised to consult with a professional to ensure code requirements are provided for. SUBJECT TO INSPECTION. Examples of common changes that may be necessary are noted below:

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-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))
• The requirement by the International Residential Code for a one (1) hour fire separation between duplex dwelling units was deleted for an ADU by a local amendment (23.85.R302.3). When a one-hour fire separation is not provided, the smoke detectors in both units must be activated simultaneously. Since branch circuits cannot be shared between units the smoke detectors must be interconnected by wireless. If a one-hour fire separation is provided, the smoke detectors do not have to simultaneously activate in both units and interconnection is not required.

**Mechanical:**

• Return air from one dwelling unit shall not be discharged into another dwelling unit. (*2009 IFGC 618.7*)

**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. (*UPC 23.25.605.3*)

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

Ross Noffsinger, P.E. Acting Building Official
Date: