

## **Text Amendment for Girdwood ADUs - Narrative**

Common to most mountain resort towns across the US, Girdwood suffers from an acute shortage of affordable housing, specifically housing that is available at a price point that is affordable by employees of businesses located within the community. The majority of the housing within the community are not occupied as primary residences and the number of available long-term rental properties has decreased with the rise of short-term rentals (aka nightly rental).

In 2018 the Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS) and Girdwood's Land Use Committee (LUC) formed a Housing Working Group (HWG) to examine a range of policies that could help alleviate some of the housing problems in the community. One of the policies considered was to amend and modernize the existing code on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to follow best practices identified in other communities, including the 2018 ADU code update for Anchorage Bowl.

Over a series of meetings, the Housing Working Group looked at updating Girdwood's ADU regulations based on those 2018 changes for Anchorage Bowl, while reflecting specific community characteristics and local conditions of Girdwood.

The HWG also worked with Jeannette Lee and Nisma Gabobe of the Sightline Institute who provided invaluable advice and guidance based on their analysis of ADU regulations across the Pacific North West. Three recommended best-practices were not adopted in the amendment:

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) reduction – analysis of CAMA data showed that FAR would not restrict ADU size due to the nature of Girdwood lot & property sizes, along with a relatively large FAR.
- Parking requirement reductions – Girdwood has limited convenient on-street parking and no requirement to pave residential parking spaces.
- Owner occupancy – due to the proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs), the owner-occupancy requirement was maintained. This will be revisited if suitable STR regulation is introduced to Title 21.

A proposed amendment was presented at the May 2021 LUC & GBOS meetings, and voted on at the June and July 2021 LUC & GBOS meetings, with the final outcome a motion of support from both bodies for the text amendment.

## **Summary of Girdwood's ADU proposal**

The main goals of the ADU update are:

- remove arbitrary lot size limits and let site design determine feasibility of ADU use
- increase the size of permissible ADUs to encourage their use as additional full-time residences
- discourage ADUs to be used as additional short-term rental properties where the primary residence is already used as a commercial short-term rental
- maintain parking requirements since Girdwood has very little convenient on-street parking
- encourage non-conforming ADUs to become legally conformant
- be sensitive to the many unusual lots and special considerations across the community by allowing variances to the new code

A table of specific topics follows:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Current code</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Detached ADU</b>	Lots >=16,800sqft	Any lot	Site layout will determine whether detached ADU works, not arbitrary lot size
<b>Attached ADU</b>	Any legal lot	No change	
<b>Minimum size</b>	300sqft	No minimum	Allow more flexibility for small units if other code allows
<b>Maximum size</b>	750sqft (for lots >15,000 sqft or GRST1/2) 600sqft otherwise; max 50% of primary unit	900sqft; max 75% of primary unit, whichever is smaller	Allow larger ADUs; perhaps owner lives in ADU
<b>Floor Area Ratio (FAR) &amp; density</b>	ADU living area is included in FAR; ADUs are not included in lot density for new subdivisions	No change	FAR only impacts handful of homes that are too big and lots that are too small under both current & proposed code
<b>Bedrooms</b>	Silent on this	Maximum 2 bedrooms	
<b>Parking</b>	1 spot for <600sqft; 2 otherwise	As before, but at least one spot per bedroom	Discourage on-street parking
<b>Owner Occupancy</b>	Primary residence or ADU must be owner-occupied	No change	Need to keep this until we have STR regulation
<b>Setbacks</b>	Standard flexibility on side setbacks	No side setback flexibility for taller (>15ft) structures	Addresses a gap in current code
<b>Architectural Compatibility</b>	Consistent in style and materials with primary residence	No restrictions	Part of Girdwood's charm is its eclectic building style
<b>Bed &amp; breakfast use</b>	Only one unit allowed	No specific restriction	Bigger issues with explosion of STR market
<b>Dry cabins</b>	Silent on this (implied)	Legal ADU must have water/sewer/electric utilities if available to primary residence	Encourage better quality housing
<b>Prior illegal use</b>	Silent on this	12 months to submit permit and make legal	Encourage more legally conforming structures
<b>Variances</b>	No variances allowed	May be requested	Improve code flexibility

**Municipality  
of  
Anchorage**



*P.O. Box 390  
Girdwood, Alaska 99587  
<http://www.muni.org/gbos>*

*David Bronson, Mayor*

*GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
Mike Edgington and Briana Sullivan, Co-Chairs  
Jennifer Wingard, Amanda Sassi, Guy Wade*

**Resolution 2021-17**

**RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR AMENDMENT OF GIRDWOOD CODE REGARDING  
ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUS)**

WHEREAS, over several years many individuals and business owners have discussed the issue of lack of achievable housing at Girdwood public meetings as well as in less formal public settings, and have requested action on the part of local government to help solve this problem; and

WHEREAS, the Girdwood Housing Working Group was established in 2018 to review the housing situation and seek solutions to make more achievable housing options available in Girdwood; and

WHEREAS, one of the successful efforts in other resort towns and in the Municipality of Anchorage has been changing code to loosen restrictions to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUS); and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes to AMC 21.09.050C.2 have been discussed for months at the Housing Working Group, have been vetted with the Sightline Institute, experts in the field who have worked on similar projects throughout the Pacific Northwest; and

WHEREAS, the Housing Working Group has reviewed and discarded or modified some suggestions based on circumstances specific to Girdwood; and

WHEREAS, adjustment to Girdwood ADU code is expected to bring about approximately 10 new dwellings per year on to the rental market, while also making existing ADUs legal under municipal code; and

WHEREAS, the community has discussed the changes in population density and the impact of more people housed in the community and generally believes that the negative impacts are outweighed by the need to expand housing opportunities to those who live and raise families here and are integral to our community's future; and

WHEREAS, after reconsideration and discussion, the Girdwood Land Use Committee supported this request by a vote of 16 in favor, 2 opposed and 4 abstaining.

THEREFORE, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors resolves support for amendment of AMC 21.09.050C.2 regarding Accessory Dwelling Units.

PASSED AND APPROVED by a vote of 3 to 2 this 19th day of July 2021.

Mike Edgington, Girdwood Land Use Committee Chair

Date

Attest

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink are present. The first signature is larger and more stylized, while the second is smaller and more cursive.

7/20/21

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA  
AO No. 2021-XX**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE SUBSECTION 21.09.050C.2 TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS WITHIN THE GIRDWOOD VALLEY**

**WHEREAS**, Girdwood has a severe shortage of attainable cost housing; and,

**WHEREAS**, Girdwood's long-term rental supply has been substantially reduced by the conversion of long-term rental housing units to short-term rental units; and

**WHEREAS**, Accessory Dwelling Units can expand the supply of good quality residential rental housing within existing residential neighborhoods; and

**WHEREAS**, Accessory Dwelling Units can improve the affordability of home ownership through rental income opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, the current Girdwood Land Use code limits the size and type of Accessory Dwelling Units through arbitrary lot size restrictions, rather than allow site design to determine the size and type of Accessory Dwelling Unit that meets the dimensional requirements of the lot; and

**WHEREAS**, there are a large number of existing non-conforming accessory structures within Girdwood, and there are benefits to both property owners and government by bringing residential accessory structures into compliance; now, therefore

**THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY ORDAINS:**

**Section 1.** Anchorage Municipal Code subsection 21.09.050C.2., Use-specific standards for accessory uses, is hereby amended to read as follows:

2. *Use-specific standards for accessory uses.*

- a. *Accessory dwelling units.* Except as set forth below, the generally applicable Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations contained in subsection 21.05.070D.1., Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) shall apply. The regulations set forth below shall apply in addition to those contained in subsection 21.05.070D.1. except, in case of conflict, the regulations below shall govern.

- i. **Purpose and intent**

- (A) Increase the supply of good quality housing for smaller households through flexible use of existing housing stock, land supply, and infrastructure;**

- (B) Respond to the local needs for seasonal housing;**

**(C) Improve the affordability of homeownership through rental income opportunity;**

**(D) Encourage existing non-conforming accessory structures to be brought into compliance;**

**(E) Provide a broader range of accessible and more affordable housing within Girdwood; and**

**(F) Protect neighborhood stability, property values, and character by ensuring that ADUs are installed under the provisions of this title.**

**ii. Application, review and approval procedures. The regulations described in 21.05.070 D.1.b.ii shall apply, except that only a land use permit is required.**

**iii. Requirements**

**(A). *Maximum number of accessory units.* [EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION II., BELOW,] Only one accessory dwelling unit [OR BED AND BREAKFAST UNIT], as defined in section 21.05.070 D., shall be allowed on any single-family residential lot. The accessory dwelling unit may be a rental unit.**

**[II. ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT AS BED AND BREAKFAST. THE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT MAY BE USED AS A BED AND BREAKFAST ROOM, BUT THE BED AND BREAKFAST FACILITY IS THEN LIMITED TO ONLY ONE GUESTROOM, THE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT.]**

**(B). *Location.* An accessory dwelling unit shall be on the same lot as the primary dwelling unit. An accessory dwelling unit [SHALL] may be attached to, or detached from, the single-family dwelling unit [; IF THE LOT IS AT LEAST 16,800 SQ. FT., THE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT MAY BE DETACHED FROM THE PRIMARY DWELLING UNIT].**

**(C). *Size.* [MAXIMUM SQUARE FOOTAGE. THE MINIMUM SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT. IS 300 SQ. FT.] The [MAXIMUM] gross square footage for an accessory dwelling unit, not including any related garage, shall be no greater than [IS 600] 900 sq. ft. [, ON A LOT UP TO AND INCLUDING 15,000 SQ. FT. AND 750 SQ. FT., ON A LOT OVER 15,000 SQ. FT.; PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE GRST-1 AND GRST-2 DISTRICTS, THE MAXIMUM SQUARE FOOTAGE**

**FOR AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT IS 750 SQUARE FEET ON A SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL LOT. THE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITOR SHALL NOT, HOWEVER,] nor exceed [50] 75 percent of the gross floor area of the primary dwelling unit excluding the ADU and garages, whichever is less.**

(D). *Floor area ratio*; density. The floor area of the accessory dwelling unit is included, along with the floor area of the primary dwelling unit, in calculating the floor area ratio on the lot, but the accessory dwelling unit is not included in calculating the average density for a new single-family subdivision.

**(E). *Maximum height.* Accessory dwelling units shall not exceed 35' in height, nor be greater than twice the height of the primary dwelling unit.**

(F). *Parking.* In addition to the parking requirements for the primary dwelling unit, one off-street parking space shall be provided for **an [EACH]** accessory dwelling unit of 600 sq. ft. or less, **[AND]** two off-street parking spaces shall be provided for an accessory dwelling unit larger than 600 sq. ft., **or one off-street parking space shall be provided for each accessory dwelling unit bedroom; whichever is greater.**

(G). *Owner occupancy.* Either the principal dwelling or the accessory unit on any site shall be occupied by the owner of the principal dwelling or owner of the lot where the accessory unit is located.

**[VIII ARCHITECTURAL COMPATIBILITY. AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT, WHETHER ATTACHED TO OR DETACHED FROM THE PRIMARY DWELLING UNIT, SHALL BE COMPATIBLE IN STYLE AND MATERIALS WITH THE PRIMARY DWELLING UNIT.]**

(H). *New accessory dwelling unit where single-family dwelling unit already in existence.* A new accessory dwelling unit to be constructed on a lot with an existing single-family dwelling unit shall conform to all development and dimensional standards in the applicable zone district regulations.

**(I). *Maximum number of bedrooms.* The ADU shall have no more than two bedrooms.**

**(J). *Setbacks.* An ADU shall not encroach into any required setback. The side and rear setback flexibility in note 2 of Table**

21.09-5 shall not apply to detached accessory units taller than 15 feet.

(K). Utilities. To the extent allowed by law and utility tariff, the ADU shall be connected to the water, sewer, and electric utilities of the single family dwelling unit. However, lots with on-site water or septic systems may have a separate water and/or septic system for the ADU.

iv. Expiration of Approval of an ADU. The regulations described in 21.05.070 D.1.b.iii.(F) shall apply, except that only a land use permit is required.

v. Transfer. The regulations described in 21.05.070 D.1.b.iii.(G) shall apply.

vi. Prior illegal use.

(A). All structures which meet the definition of accessory dwelling unit which are not recognized as legal nonconforming structures or uses of structures under chapter 21.12 shall comply with this subsection. Such structures may continue in existence provided the following requirements are met:

(1) A permit application for an ADU is submitted to the building safety division within twelve months of the effective date of this ordinance.

(2) The unit complies with the requirements of this section.

(B). If the unit does not comply with the requirements of this section at the time the permit application is filed, the building official may grant twelve months to bring the unit into conformance.

(C). This subsection does not apply to existing legal nonconforming uses of structures established pursuant to chapter 21.12.

vii. Variances. Variances may be granted from the standards and provisions of this section.

**Section 2.** This Ordinance shall be effective immediately upon passage and approval by the Assembly.