



Accessory Dwelling Units

Planning & Development Services · 1800 Continental Place · Mount Vernon WA 98273
voice 360-416-1320 · inspections 360-416-1330 · www.skagitcounty.net/planning

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

An ADU is separate living quarters located on the same lot and either detached from or included within a primary residence. As defined by the International Building Code (IBC), an ADU contains provisions for sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation; the ADU is separated from the existing house by detachment, or if attached, by solid wall construction.

Requirements

One ADU is permitted as accessory to an existing single-family dwelling provided that the following requirements are met:ⁱ

Owner occupancy. Either the principal unit or the ADU must be occupied by an owner of the property or an immediate family member of the property owner.

One family per ADU. No more than one family may occupy an ADU.

Subdivision. An ADU may not be subdivided or otherwise segregated in ownership from the principal unit of the single-family dwelling, unless specifically allowed by the zoning.

Location. The ADU may be attached to, included within the principal unit of the single-family dwelling, or located in a detached structure. All requirements of the building code regarding fire separation must be met.

Minimum size. The ADU size must be the minimum allowed by the building code.

Maximum size. The ADU may be a maximum of 900 sq ft or 50% of the size of the main residence (excluding the garage area), whichever is smaller.

Entrances. If the ADU is contained within the principal unit of the single-family dwelling, the structure may have only one obvious entrance visible to the street.

Additions. Additions to an existing structure or newly constructed detached structures created for developing an accessory dwelling unit must be designed consistent with the existing roof pitch, siding, and windows of the principal dwelling unit.

Parking. Three off-street parking spaces must be provided for the combination of the main and accessory dwelling units.

Septic. Accessory dwelling units must have a minimum of a two bedroom septic system or there must be a minimum of two bedrooms available on the existing septic system.

Water. Complete water review is required at time of building permit application.

How to Apply

The property owner must apply for a building permit on forms provided by the Department, and indicate on the building permit application form that the use is an ADU.

Recording Required

Prior to approval, the property owner must record a document with the Auditor that:ⁱⁱ

- identifies the address of the property;
- states that the owner(s) resides in either the principal dwelling unit or the accessory dwelling unit;
- includes a statement that the owner(s) will notify any prospective purchasers of the limitations on ADUs; and
- provides for the removal of the ADU by the current owner if any of the requirements are violated.

Areas Prohibiting ADUs

On Guemes Island, where the water source contains chloride levels greater than 25 ppm, ADUs are not permitted.ⁱⁱⁱ

Elimination/Expiration

A property owner may eliminate an ADU by doing all of the following:

- Obtain either a demolition permit or a change of use permit.
- Record a certificate with the Auditor stating that the ADU no longer exists on the property and that a final inspection has been performed by Skagit County Planning and Development Services.

Recreational Vehicles

RVs, including park model trailers,^{iv} may not be used as dwelling units,^v nor accessory dwelling units.^{vi}

ⁱ SCC 14.16.710.

ⁱⁱ SCC 14.16.710(1)(j).

ⁱⁱⁱ SCC 14.16.360(6).

^{iv} SCC 14.04.020, definition of "recreational vehicle."

^v SCC 14.16.945(3)(a).

^{vi} SCC 14.04.020, definition of "accessory dwelling unit."