



# Residential Development Code Initiatives Accessory Dwelling Units

Possible changes related to **accessory dwelling units** were suggested in the [Spokane Housing Action Plan \(HAP\)](#) Strategy A3 (p. 33); HAP [Implementation Plan](#) Strategy III.2; and [Housing Emergency Proclamation](#) Action Item 2.g.

Topic	Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
Code	<a href="#">Chapter 17C.300</a> SMC
Proposed Changes	Increased flexibility on size, design, and placement on a lot; parking requirements; and modifying/removing owner occupancy requirements.

## What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a small and self-contained residential unit located on the same lot as an existing single-family home. An ADU is independent of the primary home, meaning it has a separate kitchen, sleeping area, and bathroom. They are referred to as "accessory" because an ADU is meant to be smaller in size and prominence than the primary home on the lot. ADUs are known by other names as well such as granny flat, backyard house, casita, mother in-law apartment, accessory apartment, second unit, and laneway or alley house. An ADU can be internal to the primary home, such as in a basement, or as a detached structure, such as over a garage or as a standalone structure.

## Examples of ADUs



*Detached ADU over Accessory Building*



*Detached ADU | Courtesy of [accessorydwellings.org](#)*

## What are the benefits to ADUs for Spokane's housing supply?

Demographic changes across the US have highlighted a growing need and demand for smaller housing to accommodate empty nesters, single people, young professionals, and young families who either cannot afford, or do not need, a large home. Greater housing options eases demand pressures, as all residents have more affordable housing options and therefore greater mobility. For example, variety in housing allows for aging Baby Boomers to age in place, whether because the rent from an ADU supplements a fixed income, or because they can live independently for longer with the assistance of an on-site family member.



Increasing flexibility around ADU requirements and standards can encourage a moderate form of increased density in single-family neighborhoods. Accessory dwelling units add to affordability for potential tenants as rents can be cheaper than larger units, while allowing the amenities enjoyed in many of Spokane's great neighborhoods. This gentle-intensity density helps the City meet the goals of the Growth Management Act, which requires City regulations to allow for ADUs, encourage affordable housing and provide a variety of housing densities and types while preserving the character of single-family neighborhoods (per [RCW 43.63A.215](#) and [RCW 36.70A.400](#)).

The purpose of ADUs is to create new housing units while respecting the look and scale of single-family development. Accessory dwelling units can increase the housing stock of existing neighborhoods in a manner that is less intense, more equitable, and a more efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure. ADUs provide a mix of housing that responds to changing demographics and family needs while providing a broader range of accessible and more affordable housing.

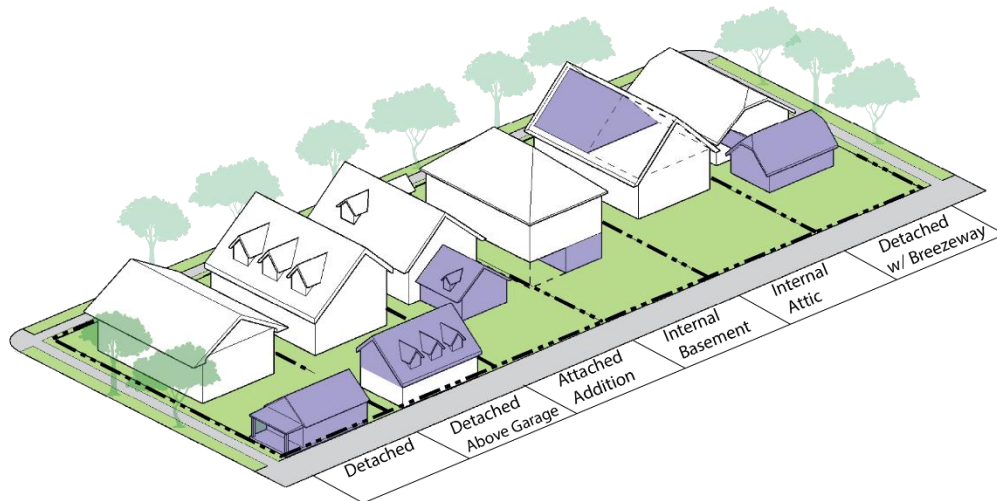
## How are they currently regulated in Spokane?

Accessory dwelling units are permitted on lots that are at least 5,000 square feet in all residential zoning districts (RA, RSF, RTF, RMF, and RHD). Here's a brief overview of the requirements for ADUs:

- The property owner must occupy either the primary dwelling or the ADU, and must occupy the ADUs for more than 6 months a year.
- A detached ADU must be the only detached structure in the rear yard.

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**zoning**  
**district.**

- Internal ADUs can be up to 800 square feet not to exceed 50% of the total square footage of the primary dwelling.
- Detached ADUs can be up to 600 square feet, and together with other accessory structures cannot exceed 15% of the total lot area for the lot.
- The maximum wall height for detached structures attached to ADUs is 10 feet, and for detached ADUs it is 16 feet.
- One additional off-street parking space is required for an ADU, except within areas served by frequent transit, no additional parking space is required within ¼ mile of a bus stop providing weekday peak-hour service at intervals of at least 15 minutes.
- For detached ADUs the front setback is 60 feet or 6 feet behind the primary dwelling, and a 5-foot minimum side and rear setback. There is no rear setback if there is an alley.
- Exterior finishes, trim, windows, and roof pitch must be the same or visually match those of the primary dwelling.



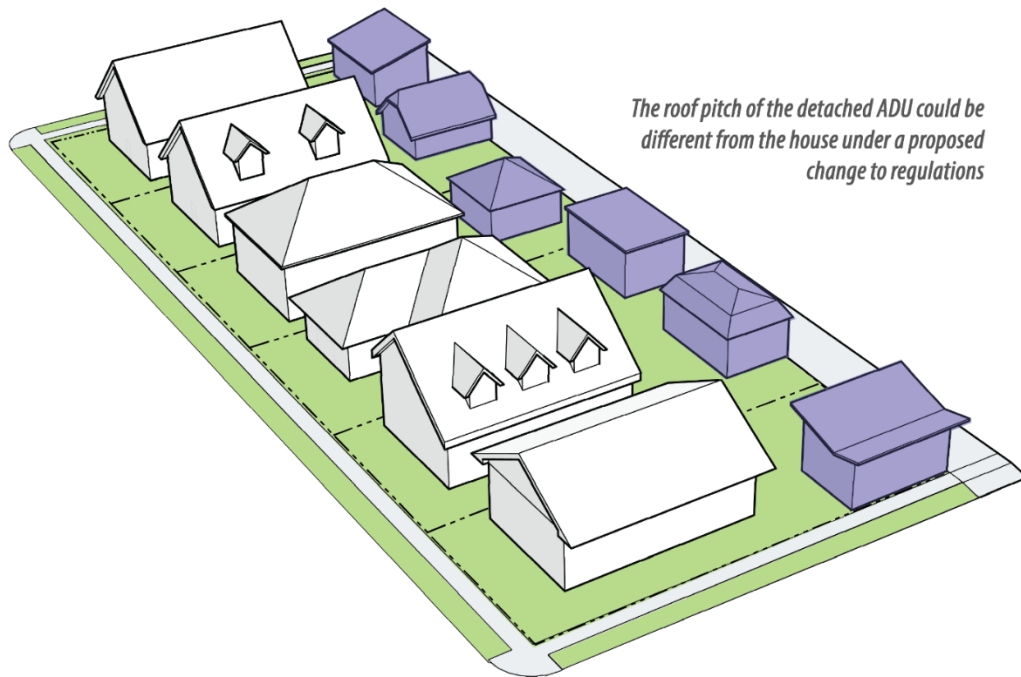
## What are the proposed changes to regulations?

Currently, the City is evaluating several revisions to the ADU requirements and development standards. Public input will help inform which changes will help encourage the construction of more ADUs, and should be taken before the Plan Commission and City Council. Development standards and requirements for ADUs could be amended in the following ways:

- Explore removing or modifying the owner occupancy requirement;
- Allow for ADUs to have a different roof pitch and style than the primary dwelling;
- Allow greater design flexibility for ADUs, such as finishes, materials, and window types with the primary dwelling;
- Reduce parking requirements;

- Increase size and dimension requirements for both attached and detached ADUs, such as higher roof and wall heights or larger maximum square footage allowances.

**Draft text is being developed and will be added at the end of this document.  
Please check back for an update.**



How can I comment on the proposed changes?

You can email comments to [developmentcode@spokanecity.org](mailto:developmentcode@spokanecity.org), or contact the project staff listed on the project webpage. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the upcoming open houses on the proposed text amendment, and also to testify at public hearings both before Plan Commission and City Council.

## Virtual Open House

January 25, 2022

12:00 – 1:15 p.m.

Virtual and call in info to be announced

January 27, 2022

4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Virtual and call in info to be announced

Please check back on the [project webpage](#) for additional information and more public meeting dates once they are scheduled.