



Accessory Dwelling Units

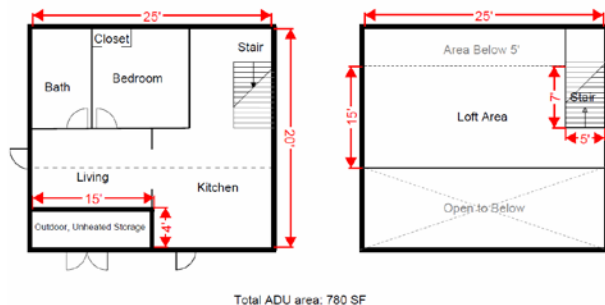
Planning & Development Services · 1800 Continental Place · Mount Vernon WA 98273
voice 360-416-1320 · inspections 360-416-1330 · www.skagitcounty.net/planning

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.**

ADU Sizing Criteria

- The ADU **minimum** size must be the minimum allowed by the building code.
- The ADU may be a **maximum** of 900 sqft or 50% of the size of the main residence (excluding the garage area), whichever is smaller. On the Assessor's property page, this is the Total Living Area.
- ADU sizing is calculated per the 2015 IBC gross floor area definition, which is the inside perimeter of the exterior walls of the building under consideration, exclusive of vent shafts and courts, without deduction for corridors, stairways, ramps, closets, the thickness of interior walls, columns, or other features. Areas that are <5 ft in height are not counted in the ADU sqft.



The above example shows floor area that counts towards the ADU calculation. As long as the applicant has a primary dwelling that is greater than or equal to 1560 sqft, this would meet our sizing criteria for an ADU. Please note that the measurements are taken from the interior wall.

Other 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.
- **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.** A new system and reserve area will be required if there is not enough capacity or room for expansion on the existing system. Per WAC 246-272A, the minimum size for standalone septic systems is two bedrooms.
- **Water.** Review is required prior to building application
- **Future Owners.** The current owner will notify prospective purchasers of the limitations on ADUs.

ADUs Prohibited

- On Guemes Island, where the water source contains chloride levels greater than 25 ppm, ADUs are not permitted.ⁱⁱ
- RVs, including park model trailers,ⁱⁱⁱ may not be used as dwelling units,^{iv} nor accessory dwelling units.^v

How to Apply for or Remove an ADU

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

Prior to approval, the property owner must record an **ADU Title Notice** (provided by the department) that identifies the address of the property and that the structure meets the requirements^{vi} of an ADU.

A property owner may eliminate an ADU by obtaining a demolition permit or a change of use permit and recording an **ADU Title Release** (provided by the department) stating that the ADU no longer exists on the property and that a final inspection has been performed the Department.

ⁱ SCC 14.16.710.

ⁱⁱ SCC 14.16.360(6).

ⁱⁱⁱ SCC 14.04.020, definition of "recreational vehicle."

^{iv} SCC 14.16.945(3)(a).

^v SCC 14.04.020, definition of "accessory dwelling unit."

^{vi} SCC 14.16.710(1)(j).