

Accessory Dwelling Units

Planning & Community Development
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An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), sometimes known as a DADU (detached accessory dwelling unit), granny flat, mother-in-law unit, guest house, basement apartment, etc., is a separate dwelling unit or home that can be either attached to the existing house (in a basement, over a garage, etc.) or detached, such as a separate building in the backyard.

ADUs are a complete separate, smaller house or apartment and can be rented out or sold separately from the main house. An ADU is a complete home and has its own kitchen, bathroom, living area and entrance that can be used independently from other homes on the property. If your space doesn't have all of these elements, it's not an ADU. Each lot in the City can have up to two ADUs. ADUs count towards the maximum number of houses allowed on a lot.

Size

An ADU can't be any bigger than 1,200 square feet. There is an exception to this if you're converting an existing house where both the house and the proposed ADU share the same roof and are on different floors (for example, a basement ADU).

Parking

In addition to the parking required for other homes on the property, an extra parking space is required for an ADU. Parking spaces are 8' x 20' and must have free and clear access without blocking in other parking spaces for other houses. Up to half of the parking spaces on a property can be compact spaces (8' x 16').

No parking for the ADU is needed if located within a half mile of a major or frequent transit stop. See our [major and frequent transit stops map](#) to see if your property is exempt from providing parking. The City can also waive parking requirements if your property is close to public transit and there is on-street parking in front of the property.

Permits

All ADUs, including internal remodels or constructing new buildings, must meet code requirements and require a Building Permit. Please visit the City's Permit Applications webpage where you can find submittal checklists and required documents for all Building Permit types.



Above, example of a backyard or detached accessory dwelling unit (DADU). Below, example of a garage converted to an attached accessory dwelling unit.



An ADU must meet applicable Shoreline building codes. Attached ADUs need to be separated from other units by a fire wall or have hard wired smoke alarms and fire sprinklers. Detached ADUs need to meet fire separation standards and have fire sprinklers. All units must have unrestricted access to utility controls for systems (i.e. water, electricity, and fuel gas) in each respective home or in a common area.

Shoreline doesn't have pre-approved ADU plans like other cities. You may need to hire a professional to help put together plans for your ADU. Your plans need to show how your ADU will meet zoning, building, fire and other code requirements.

Impact Fees

State law requires cities to make sure there aren't negative impacts from the population growth by charging impact fees. Impact fees help pay for the transportation, park and fire improvements needed to support more people. There are impact fees for each new houses added, including ADUs which have reduced fee amounts. See our [fees webpage](#) to learn more about transportation, parks and fire impact fees that would apply to your project. Impact fees are paid after the City has completed reviewing your Building Permit, but before that permit is issued.

Frontage Improvements

Frontage improvements are requirements to build curb, gutter, sidewalks, and planting street trees for the portion of the city street adjacent to your property. You don't have to build frontage improvements when you are adding an ADU.