

## ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

# Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

A Creative Approach to Expanding Access to Affordable Housing for Aging Alaskans

Funded by AARP's Livable Communities Program Abby Barton & Alicia Hughes-Skandijs

# Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

#### **Definition:**

Independent housing units typically created on single-family lots through remodeling or expanding the existing home or constructed as a detached dwelling.

Also known as "granny flats," "backyard cottages," and "mother-in-law apartments."

#### **Benefits:**

- Accessible construction & proximity to caregivers facilitates aging at home.
- Low-cost method to expand access to affordable housing.
- Increases density in areas where city services already exist.
- Can provide homeowners with additional income.



# **Creating ADU-Friendly Regulations: Do's**



- Allowing ADU development "By-right"/ministerial approval rather than through a discretionary approval process.
  - ✓ Blanket use permissions for ADUs in all areas zoned for single-family housing.
- Clear, objective standards intended to mitigate environmental hazards and impact on city resources.
  - ✓ Regulations should reflect community values without hindering development.
- ✓ Set a realistic timeline for producing decisions.
- ✓ No additional off-street parking requirements.
- Reasonable size/height/setback requirements that ensure resulting unit can meet the needs of longterm rentals and aging individuals.



31-year-old Sitka resident Adrienne Wilber standing before her partially constructed ADU built on the corner of her parent's lot [Source: KCAW]

# **Creating ADU-Friendly Regulations: Don'ts**

#### Excessive Size/Height/Setback Restrictions

- Inhibit development in dense areas with smaller lots where demand for rentals is likely higher.
- Lead to "micro" units that can make it difficult to ensure bathrooms and living spaces are of adequate size to accommodate accessibility devices such as wheelchairs or allow caregiver support.
- Discretionary Permitting Processes
  - Creates uncertainty and slows development timelines.
- Off-Street Parking Regulations
  - Stifles development on smaller lots.
- Owner-Occupancy Requirements
  - Can impact appraised home values and complicate rental configurations, suppressing available units.
- Aesthetic Design Standards
  - Makes construction more costly and technically complex.
  - Vague rules add subjectivity to conditional permitting processes.

#### An ADU Built Above a Garage in Anchorage. [Source: Sightline Institute]



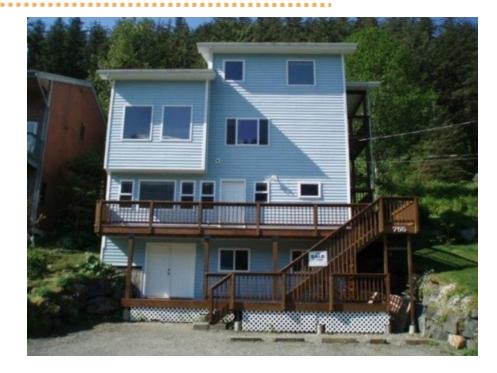
In the Municipality of Anchorage, height requirements allow for two story ADUs and offer extensions based on common design choices, such as adding an ADU above a garage.

#### SNAPSHOT OF ALASKA COMMUNITIES WITH EXISTING ADU ORDINANCES

#### Petersburg City and Borough Borough of Juneau No off-street parking Grants up to \$13,500 required provided to 16 homeowners annually <u>City</u> **City of Palmer** and Borough of Sitka Permit applications ADUs can only be reviewed within 30 used as long-term days rentals (90+ days)

# **Financing ADUs in Your Community**

- Average Cost
  - Anchorage: Attached: \$32K; Detached: \$79k
  - North Slope Borough: Nuiqsut: \$448 per sq foot; Point Lay: \$660 per sq foot; 1,500 sq foot structure: \$672,000 to \$990,000
- Designated Municipal Funding Scheme:
  - Grant-Based Subsidies
  - Low Interest Loans/Loan Pools
- Property tax abatement
- Free design help or pre-approved, permit ready plans
- Reduce/waive permitting and inspection fees
- Economies of scale.
  - RurAL CAP's Mutual Self-Help Housing Program
  - Pre-fabricated units



Attached ADU Added to the Basement of a Juneau Home Through the ADUG Program\* [Source: KTOO – Anchorage Daily News] \*Recipients must record a deed restriction agreeing not to use the ADU as a short-term rental (fewer than 30 days) for the first five years.

**THANK YOU** Please contact me about housing issues in your community! abigailb@akml.org ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

### **Strengthening Local Governments**