

# Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

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

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ALASKA  
MUNICIPAL  
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# 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 long-term 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

## City and Borough of Juneau

Grants up to \$13,500  
provided to 16  
homeowners annually

## Petersburg Borough

No off-street parking  
required

## City of Palmer

Permit applications  
reviewed within 30  
days

## City and Borough of Sitka

ADUs can only be  
used as long-term  
rentals (90+ days)

# Financing ADUs in Your Community

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- 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.*

Please contact me  
about housing issues  
in your community!

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# THANK YOU



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