

ADU 101

FOR EVERYONE

EVERY HOMEOWNER'S EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND
GUIDE TO BUILDING AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

IN WASHINGTON



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WHAT ARE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS?

Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs are secondary homes within a residential property that already has a primary residential structure. Since an ADU is a self-sufficient unit that has a sleeping area, a bathroom, and a kitchen, it allows its residents to live independently from the main house. It has many other names such as ancillary unit, backyard cottage, basement apartment, carriage house, granny flat, in-law suite, secondary suite, and many more.



FOUR REASONS YOU SHOULD BUILD AN ADU ON YOUR PROPERTY

Building an ADU on your property has many advantages. Below are some of them.

- **ADUs are a practical housing option.**

The cost of living can be high in Washington so having an ADU is a great alternative to getting an entirely different property or renting an expensive apartment for your family member. ADUs are especially beneficial to property owners with old parents whom they want to keep near or adult children who are trying to become independent while or after attending college. Additionally, ADUs can also serve as a private guest house for visiting family and friends.



- **ADUs can be an extra source of income.**

Property owners can utilize their ADU as an extra source of income by renting it out. You may rent out your ADU for the long-term, or if you are in a tourist-friendly area, you may opt to sign up with short-term rental platforms like Airbnb. In relation to financial gain, ADUs can also increase your property's potential resale value should you wish to sell it.

- **ADUs are environment-friendly.**

Due to their size, ADUs have smaller geographic and environmental footprints. They serve as low-impact infill housing that allows its residents to live more sustainably.



- **ADUs can serve as your very own office or hobby space.**

If you work remotely or have a home business, an ADU can improve your daily productivity by allowing you to work in a professional setting. Since you no longer have to rent or commute to an office, you save on time, effort, and money. Moreover, you can also turn an ADU into a uniquely customized space for your hobbies and passions. It can be a studio for artists or photographers, a home gym for fitness enthusiasts, a game room, a media room, and many more.



WHICH TYPE OF ADU IS BEST FOR ME?

There are many different styles of ADUs, but they fall into three main categories – interior, attached, and detached.



• Attached ADU (AADU)

An attached ADU is an addition that adjoins the primary dwelling. It could be placed on either the side of the main house, the rear of the main house, or above an attached garage.

It is a great option for those have:

- an aging parent who wants to live separately but whom you would still like to keep near,
- older children who want to live independently after graduation but would like to save on rent, or
- extended family or friends who will be staying in the same property for some time but would still like to have some privacy.



• Interior ADU

An interior ADU or integrated ADU is built within the same structure of the primary dwelling by converting or remodeling an existing space such as a basement or attic into a self-contained unit. Interior ADUs are often categorized under AADUs.

You may opt for this type of ADU if:

- your house has two entrances, or
- you have a basement or attic that you do not use at all.



• Detached ADU (DADU)

A detached ADU is a secondary dwelling unit that is built completely separately from the primary dwelling unit. These are standalone structures built on the same lot as the main home making it look like a tiny house within the same property.

It is perfect for those who wish to:

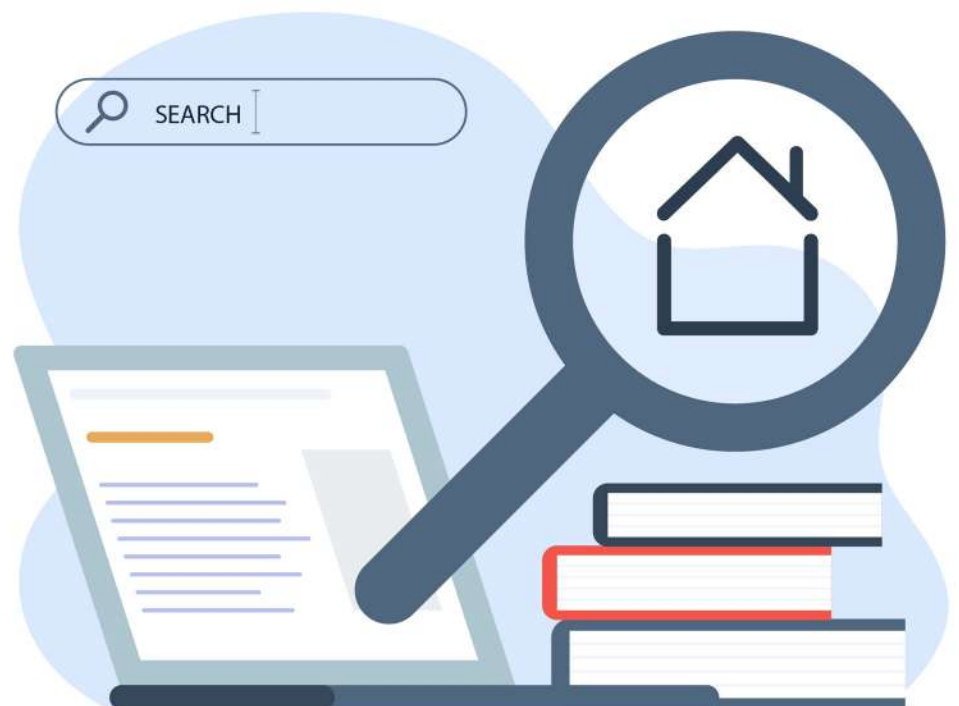
- transform a detached garage or shed into a more self-sufficient space, or
- generate rental income by investing in an ADU

The ADU Construction Process

Every single ADU is unique. There are a million design and construction combinations that you can choose from. Each project will also inevitably present its own set of challenges. However, there are fundamental steps that each ADU project will have to go through.

1. Do your research.

You are probably here reading this guide as part of your research on ADUs. Great job – step one is almost done. First and foremost, check whether an ADU is allowed on your property and if it is, what type and size. Aside from the short overview found in this mini handbook, read as much as you can regarding the specific set of ADU rules and regulations in your city or county.



2. Assess the project site.

After having a rough idea of what kind of ADU can be built on your property, assess your property on whether it can support an ADU. Also take note of any possible design or cost issues. These issues could be structural such as a buried oil tank, cesspool, and sewer lines, or paperwork-related such as deed restrictions, your homeowners association's rules, historic design overlays, and conservation overlays.



3. Build a mood board.

A mood board is a collection of photos, videos, illustrations, descriptions, and color palettes that visually represents the style and design direction that you would like to take for a certain project. You can build one manually, scrapbooking-style, by collecting magazine and brochure cutouts, or digitally via online platforms such as Pinterest. Search for as many design inspirations as possible so you can have a lot of references once you are in the designing phase.



4. Set a budget.



Just like any other construction project, the cost is one of the first and most asked questions when considering building an ADU. While architects and designers understand how the construction cost is such an important topic for every property owner, it is quite difficult to provide a rough estimate without knowing every aspect of the project.

Certain design and structure aspects can make or break a budget. Moreover, supplier prices, permit fees, and service rates could also vary from area to area. This means that the best thing to do first finance-wise is to ensure that you have access to sufficient funding. The next best thing to do would be to consult with a design and construction company to help you with the succeeding steps.

5. Get a designer and builder.

Now that you have a ballpark figure in mind on how much to spend on your ADU as well as a design vision, it is time to get an expert to help you turn your dream ADU into reality. Since building an ADU is a major home construction project that is quite literally the same as building an entire house albeit smaller,

getting a design-and-build company to do the rest of the work for you will save you time and money. Shepel Homes can manage the entire ADU construction process for you including the planning, designing, permitting, and building.



BONUS #2: ADU Rules and Regulations in Washington

CITY	QUANTITY & TYPE	SIZE	IS THE OWNER REQUIRED TO OCCUPY EITHER THE PRIMARY OR SECONDARY UNIT?	IS AN ADDITIONAL PARKING SPACE REQUIRED?	OTHER REQUIREMENTS
Arlington	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - land area of the entire property must be at least 4,200 square feet - maximum floor area of 30% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximum total square footage of impervious surfaces must be 35% or less
Auburn	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimum floor area of 300 square feet - maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit or 950 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - style must match the primary unit - must not have more than two bedrooms - must have only one entrance - must be no closer than 10 feet to an adjoining property line
Bellevue	Maximum of 1 AADU; DADUs not allowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimum floor area of 300 square feet - maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - primary unit must be existing for at least three years - combined number of occupants in the primary unit and the ADU must be within the number allowed by the definition of "family" under the Land Use Code (LUC)

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Burien	Maximum of 2 ADUs as long as one is an AADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AADU = maximum floor area of 1,000 square feet - DADU = maximum floor area of 800 square feet 	Yes	Yes	- property may be exempted from size limitations if primary unit is at least five years old
Duvall	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AADU = maximum floor area of 1,500 square feet - DADU = maximum floor area of 800 square feet 	Yes	Yes	
Edmonds	Maximum of 1 AADU; DADUs not allowed	- maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Yes	- must not have more than one bedroom
Everett	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 75% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Yes	- style must match the primary unit
Federal Way	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimum floor area of 300 square feet - maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes, for at least six months a year	Varies depending on RS zone	- must not have more than two bedrooms
Issaquah	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 1,000 square feet	Yes, or by a family member of the owner	Yes	

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Kenmore	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AADU = maximum floor area of 1,000 square feet or a single floor - DADU = maximum floor area of 1,500 square feet for property lots that are greater than 6,000 square feet and 600 square feet for property lots that are less than 6,000 square feet - maximum height is limited to 35 feet or two stories 	Yes, for at least six months a year	No	
Kent	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AADU = maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit - DADU = maximum floor area of 33% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes, for at least six months a year	Yes	
Kirkland	Maximum of 2 ADUs; 1 AADU + 1 DADU, 2 AADUs, or 2 DADUs (except in certain cases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximum floor area of 1,200 square feet or a single floor 	No	Yes	
Lake Stevens	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes	Yes	

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Lynnwood	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	No	- maximum of 1 bedroom for <600 square feet units, maximum of 2 bedrooms for >600 square feet units
Marysville	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 35% of the primary unit	Yes	Yes	
Mercer Island	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- minimum floor area of 220 square feet - maximum floor area of 80% of the primary unit or 900 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Varies depending on total square footage	
Mill Creek	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- minimum floor area of 400 square feet - maximum floor area of 30% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Yes	
Mukilteo	Maximum of 1 AADU on 5,000 square feet or greater lots Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU on 10,000 square feet or greater lots	- maximum floor area of 60% of the primary unit or 700 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Yes	- maximum of 1 bedroom

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Newcastle	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimum floor area of 300 square feet - maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit or 1,000 square feet, whichever is less, or one single floor 	Yes	Yes	
North Bend	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU on 4,000 square feet of greater lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximum floor area of 10% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - must be located in the side or rear yard areas only - maximum of 1 bedroom
Redmond	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AADU = maximum floor area of 1,500 square feet or a single floor - DADU = maximum floor area of 1,000 square feet 	Yes	Yes	
Renton	Maximum of 1 AADU; DADUs not allowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximum floor area of 75% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less 	Yes		
Sammamish	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AADU = maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit - DADU = maximum floor area of 1,000 square feet 	Yes	Yes, if lot has less than four existing parking spaces	
Seattle	Maximum of 2 ADUs as long as one is an AADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximum floor area of 1,000 square feet 	No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - must meet the green building standard

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Shoreline	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit	Yes	Yes	
Snohomish	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Yes	
Stanwood	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit or 900 square feet, whichever is less	Yes	Yes	- style must match the primary unit
Tukwila	Maximum of 1 AADU on <6,500 square foot lots Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU on 6,500 square feet or greater lots	- AADU = maximum floor area of 40% of the primary unit or 1,000 square feet, whichever is less - DADU = maximum floor area of 800 square feet	Yes	Yes	
Woodinville	Maximum of 1 AADU or 1 DADU	- DADU = maximum floor area of 50% of the primary unit	Yes	Yes	