

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Policy

Below are proposed Final Recommendations for ADU policy based on work and input to date. These recommendations will be considered by Planning Commission on Tuesday, January 2 and City Council on Saturday, January 23. Text changed or added since the draft policy was released on October 9 is bolded and underlined. Items with an asterisk are still under review by staff.

Recommendation #1: Permit ADUs City-wide

- Allow one ADU on any property developed with a house (single, two-family or townhouse)
- ADU may be either within an existing home, e.g., an “English basement” style apartment, or
- Within a detached structure, e.g., a “tiny house” or above a detached garage

Recommendation #2: General ADU Regulations

- Only one ADU shall be permitted on any lot developed with a single, two-family or townhouse dwelling
- **No more than three persons shall occupy the ADU.**
- ~~Occupancy limit: only one family shall occupy the ADU~~
- Owner occupancy: the property owner shall reside in either the ADU or the main house*
- Ownership: the ADU and main house shall be in common ownership*

Recommendation #3: Require Administrative Permit for ADUs

- An applicant wishing to construct an ADU must submit an administrative permit to the Department of Planning & Zoning

Recommendation #4: Follow Current City Policies Related to Short-term Rentals

- Short-term rentals of ADUs would be permitted, however
- Concurrent short-term rental of both the main house and ADU shall be prohibited*

Recommendation #5: Off-street Parking

- Off-street parking shall not be required for ADU, but
- No required parking spaces shall be removed to accommodate ADU construction

Recommendation #6: ADU Height and Size Limits

- ADU height shall not exceed the height of the main house or 20 feet, whichever is less
- **ADU size shall be limited by its first floor “footprint.” The ADU footprint shall not exceed the greater of:**
 - **One-third of the floor area of the main house or**
 - **350 square feet on lots >2,500 square feet; 500 square feet on lots >2,500 square feet.**
- ~~ADU size shall not exceed one third of the main house’s square footage or 750 square feet, whichever is greater~~

Recommendation #7: ADUs and Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Floor area devoted to a detached ADU can be excluded as follows:

- 100 square feet for lots less than 2,500 square feet;
- 350 square feet for lots 2,500 square feet or greater or
- 600 square feet for lots 8,000 square feet or greater.
- Also, 65 square feet for all lots developed with townhouse dwellings or within the Alexandria Old and Historic and Parker-Gray Historic Districts.

The total amount eligible for exclusion shall be subject to these limits and existing detached garages or sheds on a property. For example, a property that is 2,500 square feet which is already developed with a 100 square-foot shed could not exclude any portions of a new, detached ADU. If that same property had a 50 square foot shed, 50 square feet of a new, detached ADU would be eligible for floor area exclusion.

Similar to how detached garages are excluded from floor area, ADUs will be eligible for exclusion as follows:

- ~~For lots 2,500 square feet or larger, 350 total square feet of all accessory buildings shall be excludable~~
- ~~For lots 8,000 square feet or larger, 600 total square feet of accessory buildings shall be excludable~~
 - ~~For example, on a 2,500 square foot property with a detached garage, shed or other accessory building totaling 350 square feet or more could not exclude any portion of the detached building containing an ADU. As another example, a 2,500 square foot property with a 100 square foot shed or other accessory building could exclude up to 250 square feet of a new, detached building containing an ADU.~~

Recommendation #8: ADU Setbacks

Consistent with building code and existing Zoning Ordinance regulations related to detached garages, ADUs shall be setback at least one foot from side and rear lot lines. If the ADU has windows that face the nearest lot lines, the ADU shall be setback at least three feet from these lot lines. Dormers shall be required to meet standard zone setbacks.

Recommendation #9: Special Exception process for the conversion of an existing detached accessory structure.

A property with an existing detached accessory structure (garage, shed, other) that exceeds the height, size or setback limits may be used as an accessory dwelling with special exception approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

