

ADUs – Accessory Dwelling Units

What is an ADU?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a small, self-contained residential unit with its own kitchen and bathroom built on the same lot as an existing single family home. Examples of ADUs include: an apartment over a garage, a basement apartment, and an addition to an existing home. These are sometimes called mother-in-law apartments.

Can I add an ADU to my house?

ADU's are allowed in residential zones if they comply with the standards listed below and meet the Building Code. Tukwila City Council adopted criteria for ADUs to ensure that the new units fit with the neighborhood and do not take away from the character of Tukwila's residential areas.

Tukwila's current standards for ADUs are:

1. Detached ADUs are allowed under the following conditions:
 - Not allowed if there is an attached ADU on site (only 1 ADU per parcel)
 - Minimum lot size of 6,500 square feet
 - Unit may be up to 800 square feet
 - Detached units must be set back at least as far from the street as the main house. This would not apply to the second front of a through or corner lot, where the unit is incorporated into an existing structure such as a detached garage or where the main house is set back at least 60 feet from the front property line.
 - Height limit is 20 feet except for apartments built over a garage which may be up to 25 feet tall. Building height is calculated from the mid-point of any elevation change across the footprint of the house to the mid-point of the pitched roof.
2. Attached ADUs may occupy 40% of the square footage of the house up to a maximum of 1,000 SF, whichever is less. An attached garage would not count toward the overall square footage of a house when calculating the allowed size of an attached ADU. For example, in a house with 2,000 square feet of living area and a 400 square foot garage only the living area would be used to calculate that an ADU could occupy 800 square feet (40%) of the total house.
3. There is no minimum lot size for attached ADUs.
4. Owner occupancy is required for one unit on site, either the house or ADU.
5. The parking requirement is 1 off-street space per bedroom.
6. ADUs should be designed and located to minimize the impact on adjacent development by avoiding window and door placement across from openings on neighboring structures and use of fences and landscaping for screening.
7. ADUs may not be rented for less 30 days and must meet the [Residential Rental Business License requirements](#) if the occupant is charged rent.

What if I have an existing unpermitted ADU on my property?

The Council created a one-year amnesty period, through June 2019, for registration of unpermitted ADUs. During that time owners can come forward to register their ADUs under more flexible zoning rules, provided that they are able to meet life safety standards in the Building and Fire Codes.

Flexibility is available for:

- Exceeding the permitted height for a detached ADU
- Exceeding the permitted area for an attached or detached ADU, up to 1,200 square feet
- Not providing a second parking space for a two-bedroom ADU
- Roof pitch of less than 5:12
- Location of the ADU on the lot.

Owner occupancy, providing at least 1 parking space per ADU, and meeting the minimum lot size for a detached ADU would not be waived.

More Information

Please contact the Department of Community Development at 206-431-3670 or visit the DCD offices at 6300 Southcenter Boulevard, Suite 100, open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

