



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) Frequently Asked Questions



Q: What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

A: An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), also referred to as a granny flat, secondary dwelling unit, elder cottage housing opportunity (ECHO), or mother-daughter residence, is an apartment that can be located within the walls of an existing or newly constructed single-family home or can be an addition to an existing home. It can also be a freestanding structure on the same lot as the principal dwelling unit or a conversion of a garage or barn.

Q: Why is this Code Amendment concerning the issue of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) being addressed and why now?

A: The Code Amendment proposed concerning Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) is in response to the provisions of AB 1866, effective July 1, 2003 (Government Code §65852.150 *et seq.*), which mandates the creation of accessory second dwelling units in the single family zones. The provisions of this bill allow local jurisdictions to impose standards on second units that include, but are not limited to:

- parking
- height setbacks
- lot coverage
- architectural review
- maximum size of a unit
- standards that prevent adverse impacts on any real property that is listed in the California Register of Historic Places
- provide that ADUs do not exceed the allowable density for the lot upon which the second unit is located
- that the ADUs are a residential use that is consistent with the existing General Plan and zoning designation for the lot

Currently, the Department of City Planning has been operating on a Departmental Memorandum that were to serve as interim procedures until permanent standards were adopted into the Los Angeles Municipal Code, thereby making the City of Los Angeles non-compliant.

Q: Does the City have to allow ADUs on residentially zoned lots?

A: Yes. The ADUs are required to be provided ministerially, without discretionary review or hearing. While the Department has been operating through the interim guidelines established in a Departmental Memorandum in order to issue permits for accessory dwellings, the guidelines have not been adopted into the Code, thereby requiring the City to come into compliance and codify standards.

Q: Is every residentially zoned lot eligible to build an ADU?

A: No. In order to be eligible to build an ADU on a residentially zoned lot, the lot must be a minimum of 7,500 square feet, the existing primary dwelling unit must be in compliance with all development regulations including setbacks, FAR, lot coverage, and parking. Additionally, the proposed ADU must also meet standards and requirements in order to be issued permits to build.

Q: What are the interim guidelines for ADUs?

A: A copy of the interim guidelines can be found on the Department of City Planning's website at www.planning.lacity.org.

Q: Will the interim guidelines be proposed for the permanent ADU standards exactly as they currently stand?

A: Not necessarily. We are currently outreaching for community input on what people think the standards should be for ADUs. To be involved, please contact: Gabriela Juárez at gabriela.juarez@lacity.org or at (213) 978-1337.