



Accessory Dwelling Units

Zoning

Q1. What is an accessory dwelling unit?

A1. An “accessory dwelling unit,” or ADU, is a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot. It can be attached to the house, or it can be a separate structure.

Q2. Why does the Zoning Ordinance regulate ADUs?

A2. The Zoning Ordinance ensures that the ADU will be properly placed on the lot in relation to the house and the property lines, the structure will be compatible with the house and the neighborhood, and minimum greenspace requirements will be met.

ADUs on property in a historic district may also need a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Q3. What is the zoning approval process for an ADU?

A3. Qualified Review (QR) is a process tailored to the level of interest in a project by property owners and building occupants in the vicinity.

Upon receipt of a complete application, public notice of the request will be published in the Grand Rapids Press and a postcard mailed to property owners and residents within 300’ of the property. The postcard describes the request and provides direction on how an affected party can request a formal public hearing. A public hearing must be requested within fourteen (14) days.

If no public hearing is requested, the Qualified Review application shall be processed administratively. If a public hearing is requested, the application for the ADU will be processed as a Special Land Use, requiring a public hearing and consideration by the Planning Commission.

Q4. What information is required?

- A4. The following information is needed:
- **Completed QR application form**
 - **Response to QR review standards**
 - **Written description of the project**
 - **Property survey** showing existing conditions
 - **Site plan** showing the proposed ADU and any other changes in relation to the existing conditions on the property.
 - **Elevation drawings** showing all sides of the new structure and identifying all building materials and dimensions.
 - **Neighborhood outreach summary** including activities conducted, any correspondence distributed, meeting sign-in sheets, meeting notes, letters of support, etc.

Q5. How large can an ADU be?

A5. The floor area of an ADU must be at least 400 square feet, no larger than 850 square feet, and not more than 40 percent of the gross floor area of the main house.

Existing improvements on a property can affect the maximum size of a new ADU due to greenspace requirements. All permanent structures, sidewalks, patios, decks and pavement count against greenspace.

The greenspace requirement depends on the Zone District of the property:

Zone	TN	MCN	MON
LDR	40%	50%	60%
MDR	30%	40%	50%

Q6. Where can an ADU be located?

A6. ADUs attached to the house are subject to the setbacks of the Zone District in which the property is located. A Planner can assist with determining this.

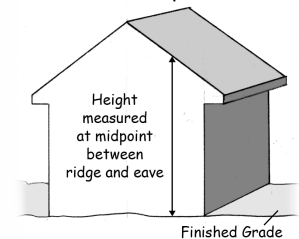
ADUs in separate structures are generally subject to the following setbacks:

- May not be located forward of the house.
- Must be at least 6 feet from the house.
- Must be at least 3 feet from the side and rear lot lines. Special Building Code requirements apply if a wall is closer than 5 feet to the property line.
- Must be at least 3 feet from any other accessory structure, such as a shed.

Q7. How tall can my accessory dwelling unit be?

A7. If incorporated within the main house, an ADU is subject to the permissible height in the Zone District.

The maximum height for an ADU in a separate structure is 25 feet if the setback requirements for a primary structure are met. Otherwise, an ADU in a separate structure shall be no higher than 20 feet. The Planning Commission may increase the height up to 25 feet with Special Land Use approval.





Accessory Dwelling Units

Q8: Can the ADU be rented out?

A8: Either the main house or the ADU must be owner occupied, and a deed restriction stipulating that the ADU will not be conveyed separately from the main house shall be recorded.

If the ADU is leased, it must be registered with the City as a rental unit.

Be aware that ADUs may not be leased for terms of fewer than 30 days and may not be used for short-term rental purposes such as an Airbnb or Vrbo rental.

Building and Trades

Q9. What Building Codes apply?

A9. ADUs attached to, or within a home, are treated as a duplex, or two-family structure. Keep in mind:

- A licensed residential contractor is required.
- Mechanical, electrical, or plumbing work requiring a permit must be performed by a licensed contractor.
- Separate air handling systems are required for the main house and the ADU.
- The main house and the ADU need to be fire separated with a one-hour rating.
- Residents of each unit must have access to their breaker panel at all times.

Converting either a portion of an existing single-family home or an existing detached accessory structure (such as a garage) to an ADU may require wall and floor alterations to meet the fire separation requirement.

A new detached ADU is subject to all building codes applicable to any single family-home.

Water and Sewer

Q7. What are the requirements for water and sewer?

A7. For ADUs attached to or within a home, a plumber is responsible for ensuring the water service, water meter, and sewer lateral are adequately sized for the increase in water demand and sewer capacity. Additional connection permit fees will be due if a larger meter is required.

An ADU detached from the main house is subject to the same requirements as a single-family home:

- A dedicated water connection is required.
- A dedicated sewer connection is preferred.
- Water/sewer connection and inspection permits are required.
- Only City of Grand Rapids staff may tap a live water main.

Private submetering is allowed but is the responsibility of the owner. Only one City meter and bill will be provided for each building.

Water or sewer questions can be directed to watersewerservices@grcity.us.