FACT SHEET:

PLAN AN APARTMENT

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

SEPTEMBER 2023

This document is a summary only. Any conflict with City Code is unintentional, and code prevails in all instances.
Read it at library.municode.com/fl/orlando

Commonly known as an in-law suite, garage apartment, guest house, or granny flat, an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a separate living unit on the same lot as a single-family home.

CITY CODE

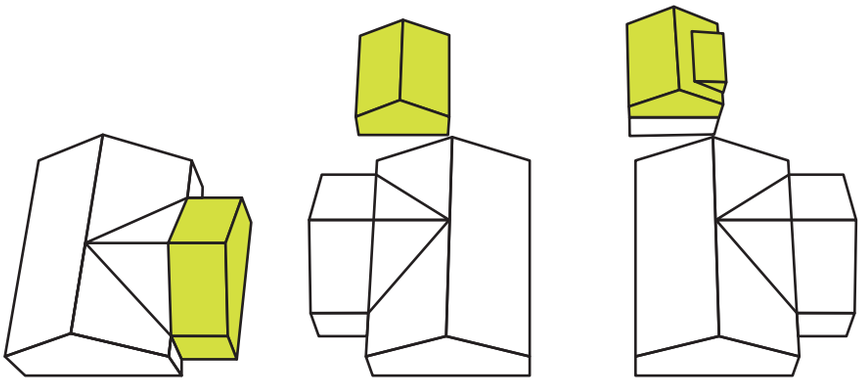
Ch. 58 Part 3A—Accessory Dwelling Units

ZONING

Residential (all R)

Mixed Office-Residential (all MXD)

Office (O-1, O-2)



ATTACHED ADU

DETACHED ADU

WHAT IS AN ADU IN ORLANDO?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a separate living unit with a **bedroom, full bath, and kitchen**.

Zoning districts: All R (Residential), all MXD (Mixed Residential-Office), O-1 (Office Low Intensity), and O-2 (Office Medium Intensity), subject to minimum lot size requirements. Contact the Historic Preservation Officer if your home is in a Historic District (/HP zoning overlay).

Only **one (1) ADU per lot**. No ADUs allowed on duplex and tandem lots; creating a third dwelling unit requires complying with multiplex standards, if allowed by the zoning district (R-2B zoning and up).

An ADU **may be rented** via a standard residential lease. Short-term rentals under 30 days are restricted: visit orlando.gov/homeshare for full rules.

Maximum size is 500 sq. ft. or 1,000 sq. ft. of building space, as long as the lot meets minimum lot size requirements, setbacks, parking, impervious surface limits, and other factors. Read City Code Ch. 58 Part 3A—Accessory Dwelling Units for full rules; use the "ADU Worksheet" pages in this guide to help.

Our ADU standards are online. Go to orlando.gov/zoning and click "Residential Design Guidelines"

PREPARE FOR POTENTIAL COSTS

Property survey

Design and contracting professionals

Planning Fees (orlando.gov/planning):

- Appearance Review (if applicable)
- Modification or Variance (if applicable)

Permitting Fees (orlando.gov/permits):

- Building (BLD), electrical (ELE), plumbing (PLM), mechanical (MEC), engineering (ENG) permits
- Impact fees (multi-family category, orlando.gov/impactfees): Transportation, Park, Sewer Benefit and Water Connection, School Impact for ADUs greater than 500 sq. ft.
- Inspections

Utility connections

Note: For safety reasons, living spaces must be properly permitted. Do-it-yourself conversions and pre-fabricated units occupied without final inspections are subject to code enforcement penalties.

Creating an additional dwelling unit on your lot could potentially affect your property tax. Contact the Orange County Property Appraiser for more information.

FORM AND EXTERIOR APPEARANCE

ADU must be located in a permanent structure built on a permanent foundation.

- Recreational vehicles and mobile homes may not be used as they do not meet the standards for a permanent structure.
- There are no regulations related to specific forms such as “tiny homes,” modular, or prefab — all ADUs must meet Florida Building Code and relevant residential construction requirements.

ADU must be compatible with the design of the main house or alternatively, must have a special architectural identity that can be approved by the Appearance Review Official.

- Properties within the Traditional City (/T zoning overlay) have specific architectural standards, such as transparency (window) minimums, roof shape, and porch depth. See Ch. 62 Part 6, Traditional City Design Standards.
- For information about using shipping containers, request the Shipping Containers Architecture document (DET2020-10194).

Questions on zoning and architecture can be directed to the Planning Division at cityplanning@orlando.gov..

INTERIOR REQUIREMENTS

Bedroom must have an operating window that allows egress.

Kitchen must include a sink with hot and cold running water, food preparation surfaces, food storage areas (shelves, cabinets and/or drawers), stove (portable equipment such as a microwave or hot plate are not sufficient), and refrigerator.

Without a kitchen (i.e., kitchen plumbing, electrical, cabinetry, etc.), the space might be classified as a “spare bedroom” and would not have to comply with Orlando’s ADU regulations.

Bathroom must include a sink and tub or shower with hot and cold running water and a toilet with running water. The room must be at least 30 sq. ft. and include appropriate accessories (towel rod, etc.). Must have mechanical ventilation or an operable window.

Heat is required. Air conditioning is not required. However, if air conditioning is not provided, windows must be operable and screened to allow proper ventilation.

Must be connected to the electric utility network. Solar power may be used as a secondary supply only.

If the main house has a public potable water connection and/or sanitary sewer connection and is served by a public utility, the ADU must be connected to the public utility service.

If the main house has well water and/or is on a septic system, please work with your contractor to determine which health codes apply. It is possible you will be required to connect to a public utility system.

Minimum building standards are in City Code Sections 14.10 and 14.11, and in the Florida Building Code. Questions about construction can be directed to the Permitting Division at permittingservices@orlando.gov.

ALLOWABLE SIZE

ADU size is measured by the amount of building space. Any such space adjacent to, and connected by a door to, an ADU is counted as part of the ADU. For example, an ADU cannot open up to a bonus room or office in the main home.

Not measured as ADU space:

- Garage
- Open-air porches, balconies, and breezeways (may be roofed over but not "walled")
- Exterior stairs (may extend 2 ft. into the setback)
- Roof eaves (may extend 3 ft. into the setback)

MAXIMUM ADU SIZE

Depends on the zoning district and your lot area. If your lot is large enough, you may build an ADU up to 500 sq. ft.; over-sized lots might be eligible for an ADU up to 1,000 sq. ft.

(If your lot is too small, check with Planning staff to see if it is a "legally non-conforming lot of record." If so, it might be eligible for a variance to allow an ADU.)

In all cases, be aware that additional standards such as setbacks, ISR, FAR, and parking might require reducing the size from 500 or 1,000 sq. ft.

If located in a Historic Preservation (/HP) district, contact the Historic Preservation Officer for additional details that might apply to your area.

MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY

An ADU must be large enough to accommodate the number of people who will live there. See Section 404 of the International Property Maintenance Code titled "Occupancy Limitations" for details.

HEIGHT

Depends on the zoning district; typically, it is 30 or 35 ft. (See Ch. 58 Part 1B, Zoning Tables.) An average story is 10-12 ft. tall. A two-story ADU is allowed behind a one-story home, provided the ADU is smaller in mass than the principal structure.

LOT SIZE REQUIRED TO BUILD AN ADU †

City Code Section 58.501(C)

Zoning	ADU up to 500 sq. ft.	ADU up to 1,000 sq. ft.
R-1AA	10,000 sq. ft.	15,000 sq. ft.
R-1A	7,700	11,550
R-1	6,000	9,000
R-1N	5,500	8,250
R-2A	5,500	**
R-2B	5,000	**
R-3A	5,500	**
R-3B	5,000	**
R-3C	4,500	**
R-3D	4,500	**
MXD-1	5,000	**
MXD-2	4,500	**
O-1	5,500	**
O-2	4,500	**

Find your property's zoning district at orlando.gov/zoning

† In Laureate Park and all other neighborhoods in the Southeast Orlando Sector, an ADU up to 1,000 sq. ft. may be built on any property. There is no minimum lot size. All other standards apply.

In historic districts, an ADU up to 700 sq. ft. may be approved by Certificate of Appropriateness. All other standards apply.

** If unit above 500 sq. ft. is proposed, it must be a tandem development (Ch. 58, Part 3C), including the relevant building separations, setbacks, and lot split.

Minimum building standards are in City Code Sections 14.10 and 14.11, and in the Florida Building Code. Questions about construction can be directed to the Permitting Division at permittingservices@orlando.gov.

ADU WORKSHEET: SIZE CALCULATIONS

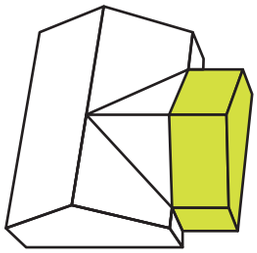
Detailed eligibility for an ADU depends on zoning, lot size, impervious surface ratio, and other factors. You'll need to use your property survey to get the data and complete the calculations.

WHAT IS MY ZONING DISTRICT?	Check the Orange County Property Appraiser information at ocpafl.org. Look at the "Property Features" tab, or go to orlando.gov/zoning
WHAT IS MY LOT SIZE?	Check OCPA, same as above, and/or your survey.
WHAT OTHER PROPERTY DETAILS DO I NEED?	Living Area and Gross Area (sq. ft.) — Check OCPA, same as above, and/or your survey. Backyard Area (sq. ft.) — The space between the house and the rear property line. Impervious Surface Area (sq. ft.) — Total area of impervious materials including roofed buildings, gazebos, sheds, driveways, patios, etc. (Pool surface is pervious.)
HOW BIG CAN THE ADU BE?	Up to 500 sq. ft. or up to 1,000 sq. ft., depending on lot size. Cross reference your lot size and zoning district with the table in City Code Sec. 58.501(c), which is also printed on Page 4 of this document. After determining the upper limit of 500 sq. ft. or 1,000 sq. ft., use the calculations below to refine your size requirements.
BACKYARD COVERAGE	The maximum backyard coverage is 35%. Derive the area of the backyard by measuring the space between the main house and the rear property line. The area on either side of the house beyond the plane of the rear facade does not count towards the backyard area. Multiply that number by 0.35. The result is the largest footprint possible for the ADU, provided it meets all other size requirements.
FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)	The maximum FAR is 0.50, or 0.40 in Colonialtown (zoned R-2A/T/SP). Add the living area of the main house (all stories, not just the first floor / footprint) to the proposed living area of the ADU, and divide that number by the total land area. Exclude garages, carports, open-air porches, balconies, breezeways and exterior stairs from the measurements (See Sec. 66.200 for definition of FAR). Floor Area Ratio = (House Area + ADU Area) / Lot Area
IMPERVIOUS SURFACE RATIO (ISR)	Each zoning district limits the amount of impervious surface on a lot. Check the zoning tables to find your district's limit; typically, it is 0.55. Impervious Surface Ratio = Impervious Surface Area / Lot Area
MASSING	The ADU/garage cannot be larger than the main house. Compare the area of the proposed ADU, including garage, carport, porches and balconies, to the area of the main house and its garage.

ADU WORKSHEET: LOT LAYOUT

The City of Orlando generally classifies an ADU as attached or detached, relative to the main house. It may be located only at the side or rear of the main house, not in front.

ATTACHED



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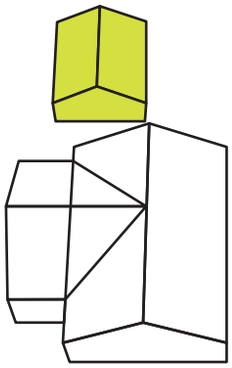

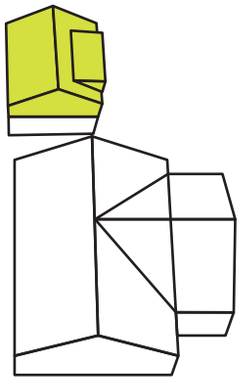

WHAT ARE THE SETBACKS?

Attached ADU setbacks are the same as for the main house. See the zoning tables in City Code (Ch. 58, Part 1B). Some common zoning district setbacks:

- ⇨ R-1A: Side 7.5 ft., Street Side 15 ft., Rear 25 ft.
- ⇨ R-1: Side 6 ft., Street Side 15 ft., Rear 25 ft.
- ⇨ R-2A, R-2B: Side 5 ft., Street Side 15 ft., Rear 25 ft.

Detached ADU setbacks are the same as for an accessory structure (Ch. 58, Part 5A):

- Side setback is the same as for the main house. See the zoning tables in Ch. 58, Part 1B, and a few common ones listed above.
- Rear setback is 5 ft. for 1 story (up to 12 ft. tall); otherwise, 15 ft.
- Two-story ADUs less than 500 sq. ft. might be eligible for a rear setback reduction — ask about a Modification of Standards, Sec 65.302(b)(9).
- Building separation is 5 ft. for 1 story (up to 12 ft. tall); otherwise, 10 ft.

Exception: ADUs greater than 500 sq. ft. in R-2, R-3, MXD, and O zoning must be developed as tandem (Ch. 58, Part 3C). Setbacks vary by lot type.

WHAT ARE THE PARKING REQUIREMENTS?

The **main house** must have at least one parking space behind the front setback. If the original garage has been converted into living space, that parking might need to be replaced.

ADU parking depends on size.

- If the ADU is 500 sq. ft. or smaller, no additional parking is required.
- If the ADU is larger than 500 sq. ft., one (1) additional parking space is required.

These spaces must be located behind the front and street side yard setbacks and independently accessible. They cannot be both in the garage of the house or "in tandem."

Open parking must have a 2-foot setback from side lot line.

Parking space access and location must meet our Standards for Construction of Driveway Approaches, Sec. 61.240.

ADU EXAMPLES

NEXT STEPS

- Obtain an up-to-date, professional property survey.
- Work with a design professional to draw a site plan. Include the calculations for your property's ISR (impervious surface ratio) and FAR (floor area ratio).
- Confirm utility providers and availability of connections.
- Submit for building permits with Permitting Services: orlando.gov/permits

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Zoning Questions: 407.246.2269
Press "1" to reach the Planner on Call
cityplanning@orlando.gov
Permit Questions: 407.246.2271
digitalpermits@orlando.gov

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