



2025 Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance

Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) 20.10.036

Overview:

On December 8, 2025, the Bellingham City Council voted and approved an ordinance amending the Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) Titles 20 and 21 to improve Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) standards, permitting process, affordability, and consistency with state legislation.

ADUs are seen as a valuable component in achieving the City's infill housing goals. There are a range of benefits to enabling ADU development in Bellingham including increasing housing choice and affordability as well as providing an opportunity for homeowners to earn additional income and/or age in place.

The updated ADU ordinance went into effect on December 23, 2025.

ADU Updates at a Glance:

- ADU review is streamlined to a Type I permit process for most applications, and may include requests for minor modifications from applicable development standards.
- Allows up to two ADUs per lot in any configuration of attached or detached.
- The ADUs may be allowed on a lot with a single-family dwelling unit, duplex, triplex, fourplex, townhome, or other principal unit.
- ADUs may be sold or conveyed as a condominium unit independent of the principal unit.
- Owner occupancy is not required as a condition of permitting ADUs. Exception: ADUs may be subdivided onto lots separate from the principal unit only when the lots whereon the ADUs are located are deed restricted to provide affordable owner-occupied units.
- Detached ADUs may include up to 800 SF of ancillary space (garage, workshop, garden/storage shed, etc.) in addition to the 1,000 SF ADU.
- ADUs are no longer exempt from zoning density limits; they are considered middle housing (Infill Housing) units for density purposes.
- Public street improvements are not required as a condition of permitting ADUs.
- Per Ordinance [2025-12-35](#) which took effect December 23, 2025, no parking is required to add ADUs to your property. Parking that is added electively is required to meet development standards per BMC [20.10.036\(B\)\(9\)](#) and [20.12.010](#).

Need More Information?

Go to the following link: [Accessory Dwelling Units \(ADUs\) - City of Bellingham](#)

To discuss feasibility of your project, please visit the Permit Center to consult with a Planner.

Permit Center

210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: (360) 778-8300 Fax: (360) 778-8301 TTY: 711 (WA Relay)

Email: permits@cob.org Web: www.cob.org/permits

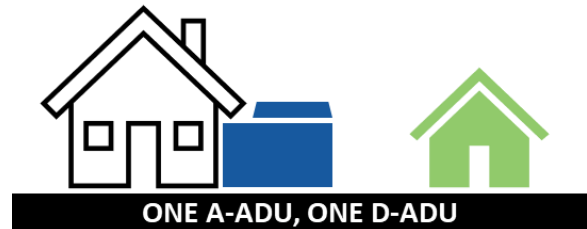


Possible ADU Configurations with Primary Dwelling Unit:

- Two attached accessory dwelling units (A-ADUs);
- One A-ADU and one detached accessory dwelling unit (D-ADU); or
- Two D-ADUs, which may be comprised of either one or two detached structures.



One A-ADU shown as a converted attic, and the second A-ADU shown as a converted basement. Three attached dwelling units may require design as R-2 dwelling units under the provision of the IBC.



One A-ADU shown as an addition to the primary residence and one D-ADU.



Two D-ADUs shown attached to each other as a two-story building.



Two D-ADUs shown as separate detached structures.



Two D-ADUs shown attached to each other side-by-side.

Disclaimer: Diagrams shown above are visual examples of possible ADU configurations. Many configurations are possible. Different building codes may be applicable (IBC vs IRC) depending on the design and configuration. Please consult with the Permit Center to discuss the feasibility of your project.