

**GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTING  
THE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU) REQUIREMENT  
UNDER OREGON SENATE BILL 1051**



*M. Keplinger's backyard detached ADU, Richmond neighborhood, Portland, OR.  
(Photo courtesy of Ellen Bassett and [accessorydwellings.org](http://accessorydwellings.org).)*

**OREGON DEPARTMENT OF LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Oregon Department of  
Land Conservation  
and Development

## Introduction

As housing prices in Oregon go up, outpacing employment and wage growth, the availability of affordable housing is decreasing in cities throughout the state. While Oregon's population continues to expand, the supply of housing, already impacted by less building during the recession, has not kept up. To address the lack of housing supply, House Speaker Tina Kotek introduced House Bill 2007 during the 2017 legislative session to, as she stated, "remove barriers to development." Through the legislative process, legislators placed much of the content of House Bill 2007 into Senate Bill 1051, which then passed, and was signed into law by Governor Brown on August 15, 2017. In addition, a scrivener's error<sup>1</sup> was corrected through the passage of HB 4031 in 2018.

Among the provisions of SB 1051 and HB 4031 is the requirement that cities and counties of a certain population allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as described below:

- a) *A city with a population greater than 2,500 or a county with a population greater than 15,000 shall allow in areas within the urban growth boundary that are zoned for detached single-family dwellings the development of at least one accessory dwelling unit for each detached single-family dwelling, subject to reasonable local regulations relating to siting and design.*
- b) *As used in this subsection, "accessory dwelling unit" means an interior, attached or detached residential structure that is used in connection with or that is accessory to a single-family dwelling.*

This new requirement becomes effective on July 1, 2018 and subject cities and counties must accept applications for ADUs inside urban growth boundaries (UGBs) starting July 1, 2018. Many local governments in Oregon already have ADU regulations that meet the requirements of SB 1051, however, some do not. Still others have regulations that, given the overall legislative direction to encourage the construction of ADUs to meet the housing needs of Oregon's cities, are not "reasonable." The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) is issuing this guidance and model code language to help local governments comply with the legislation. The model code language is included on its own page at the end of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> *The scrivener's error in SB 1051 was removing the words "within the urban growth boundary." HB 4031 added the words into statute, thus limited the siting of ADUs within UGBs.*

## **Guidance by Topic**

The purpose of the following guidance is to help cities and counties implement the ADU requirement in a manner that meets the letter and spirit of the law: to create more housing in Oregon by removing barriers to development.

### *Number of Units*

The law requires subject cities and counties to allow “at least one accessory dwelling unit for each detached single-family dwelling.” While local governments must allow one ADU where required, DLCD encourages them to consider allowing two units. For example, a city or county could allow one detached ADU and allow another as an attached or interior unit (such as a basement conversion). Because ADUs blend in well with single-family neighborhoods, allowing two units can help increase housing supply while not having a significant visual impact. Vancouver, BC is a successful example of such an approach.

### *Siting Standards*

In order to simplify standards and not create barriers to development of ADUs, DLCD recommends applying the same or less restrictive development standards to ADUs as those for other accessory buildings. Typically that would mean that an ADU could be developed on any legal lot or parcel as long as it met the required setbacks and lot coverage limits; local governments should not mandate a minimum lot size for ADUs. So that lot coverage requirements do not preclude ADUs from being built on smaller lots, local governments should review their lot coverage standards to make sure they don’t create a barrier to development. To address storm water concerns, consider limits to impermeable surfaces rather than simply coverage by structures.

In addition, any legal nonconforming structure (such as a house or outbuilding that doesn’t meet current setback requirements) should be allowed to contain, or be converted to, an ADU as long as the development does not increase the nonconformity.

### *Design Standards*

Any design standards required of ADUs must be clear and objective (ORS 197.307[4]). Clear and objective standards do not contain words like “compatible” or “character.” With the exception of ADUs that are in historic districts and must follow the historic district regulations, DLCD does not recommend any special design standards for ADUs. Requirements that ADUs match the materials, roof pitch, windows, etc. of the primary dwelling can create additional barriers to development and sometimes backfire if the design and materials of the proposed

ADU would have been of superior quality to those of the primary dwelling, had they been allowed.

*Parking*

Requiring off-street parking is one of the biggest barriers to developing ADUs and it is recommended that jurisdictions not include an off-street parking requirement in their ADU standards. Adding off-street parking on many properties, especially in older centrally-located areas where more housing should be encouraged, is often either very expensive or physically impossible. In addition, when adding an additional off-street parking space requires a new or widened curb cut, it removes existing on-street parking, resulting in no net gain of parking supply. As an alternative to requiring off-street parking for ADUs, local governments can implement a residential parking district if there is an on-street parking supply shortage. For more help on parking issues, visit [www.oregon.gov/lcd/tgm/pages/parking.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/lcd/tgm/pages/parking.aspx) or contact DLCD.

*Owner Occupancy*

Owner-occupancy requirements, in which the property owner is required to live on the property in either the primary or accessory dwelling unit, are difficult to enforce and not recommended. They may be a barrier to property owners constructing ADUs, but will more likely simply be ignored and constitute an on-going enforcement headache for local governments.

*Public Utilities*

Development codes that require ADUs to have separate sewer and water connections create barriers to building ADUs. In some cases, a property owner may want to provide separate connections, but in other cases doing so may be prohibitively expensive.

*System Development Charges (SDCs)*

While SDCs are not part of the development code and SB 1051 does not require them to be updated, local governments should consider revising their SDCs to match the true impact of ADUs in order to remove barriers to their development. ADUs are generally able to house fewer people than average single-family dwellings, so their fiscal impact would be expected to be less than a single-family dwelling. Accordingly, it makes sense that they should be charged lower SDCs than primary detached single-family dwellings.

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## Accessory Dwellings (model code)

**Note:** ORS 197.312 requires that at least one accessory dwelling be allowed per detached single-family dwelling in every zone within an urban growth boundary that allows detached single-family dwellings. Accessory dwellings are an economical way to provide additional housing choices, particularly in communities with high land prices or a lack of investment in affordable housing. They provide an opportunity to increase housing supply in developed neighborhoods and can blend in well with single-family detached dwellings. Accessory dwelling regulations can be difficult to enforce when local codes specify who can own or occupy the homes. Requirements that accessory dwellings have separate connections to and pay system development charges for water and sewer services can pose barriers to development. Concerns about neighborhood compatibility, parking, and other factors should be considered and balanced against the need to address Oregon's housing shortage by removing barriers to development.

The model development code language below provides recommended language for accessory dwellings. The italicized sections in brackets indicate options to be selected or suggested numerical standards that communities can adjust to meet their needs. Local housing providers should be consulted when drafting standards for accessory dwellings, and the following standards should be tailored to fit the needs of your community.

Accessory dwellings, where allowed, are subject to review and approval through a Type I procedure[, pursuant to Section \_\_\_\_\_.] and shall conform to all of the following standards:

**[A. One Unit.** *A maximum of one Accessory Dwelling is allowed per legal single-family dwelling. The unit may be a detached building, in a portion of a detached accessory building (e.g., above a garage or workshop), or a unit attached or interior to the primary dwelling (e.g., an addition or the conversion of an existing floor).*

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**A. Two Units.** *A maximum of two Accessory Dwellings are allowed per legal single-family dwelling. One unit must be a detached Accessory Dwelling, or in a portion of a detached accessory building (e.g., above a garage or workshop), and one unit must be attached or interior to the primary dwelling (e.g., an addition or the conversion of an existing floor).]*

### **B. Floor Area.**

1. A detached Accessory Dwelling shall not exceed [800-900] square feet of floor area, or [75] percent of the primary dwelling's floor area, whichever is smaller.
2. An attached or interior Accessory Dwelling shall not exceed [800-900] square feet of floor area, or [75] percent of the primary dwelling's floor area, whichever is smaller. However, Accessory Dwellings that result from the conversion of a level or floor (e.g., basement, attic, or second story) of the primary dwelling may occupy the entire level or floor, even if the floor area of the Accessory Dwelling would be more than [800-900] square feet.

**C. Other Development Standards.** Accessory Dwellings shall meet all other development standards (e.g., height, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.) for buildings in the zoning district, except that:

1. Conversion of an existing legal non-conforming structure to an Accessory Dwelling is allowed, provided that the conversion does not increase the non-conformity; and

2. No off-street parking is required for an Accessory Dwelling.

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**Definition** (This should be included in the “definitions” section of the zoning ordinance. It matches the definition for Accessory Dwelling found in ORS 197.312)

**Accessory Dwelling** – An interior, attached, or detached residential structure that is used in connection with, or that is accessory to, a single-family dwelling.