



Zoning Ordinance Update: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

On September 23th, Norfolk City Council adopted updates to the Zoning Ordinance for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). These updates simplify the process to build an ADU , allow larger structures to be built, and provide additional flexibility for both parking and utilities that serve the ADU.

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a smaller residential dwelling that is located on the same property as a primary residence but is independent from the primary residence. An ADU contains living areas, one or more bedrooms, bathrooms, and a full kitchen. An ADU may be in the same building or in a building separate from the primary residence. Those in the same building will often have separate entrances, but that is not required.

What changes were made to the Zoning Ordinance?

Section 4.3.3.E.(1)(a) Performance standards for ADUs was updated with the following changes:

- ADUs are now by-right in all residential zoning districts except MF-AC, as long as the property meets the dimensional requirements for that district. A Conditional Use Permit would be available for a property that does not meet the minimum requirements, as long as the owner can demonstrate how the deficiency is to be addressed.
- No additional parking is required as long as the primary residence provides at least the minimum required number of parking spaces (typically 2).
- ADUs are now allowed to have separate utility service from the primary residence.
- ADUs can be served by a separate driveway if the standards typical for a single-family dwelling are met.
- The maximum size of an ADU is now 800 square feet or 50% of the primary residence, whichever is smaller.



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What other performance standards apply to ADUs?

Other standards in Section 4.3.3.E.(1)(a) include:

- No more than one ADU shall be located on a lot.
- The property owner shall reside on-site, either in the principal dwelling or in the accessory dwelling unit, during times that the unit is available for rent.
- Have the same street address as the principal dwelling.
- Not be subdivided or otherwise segregated in ownership from the principal dwelling.
- Maintain the architectural design, style, appearance and character of the principal dwelling to which it is accessory by incorporating design elements of the principal dwelling like compatible materials, similar façade treatment, colors, window style/treatment, and roof design and pitch.

Carriage houses (2nd story over a detached garage) are unique to the Coastal Character District and are only permitted within that character district. They are subject to the Coastal Character District Pattern Book and require higher quality materials.

How do I apply to build an Accessory Dwelling Unit?

The process starts with applying for a residential building permit via the City's e-permitting portal at <https://norfolkvapermits.force.com/>. During the City's review of the building permit, zoning staff will review the application to ensure that it meets the applicable standards in the ordinance and will issue a zoning certificate. Applications for an ADU with separate utility service from the principal structure will need to contact the Utility Department to set up that service.

Where can I get additional information?

Norfolk AIR: air.norfolk.gov

Norfolk Zoning Ordinance: www.norfolkva.gov/norfolkzoningordinance

(757) 664-6588

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