



HOW-TO GUIDE: Accessory Dwelling Units



PLANNING & BUILDING SERVICES
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1

Introduction

What is an ADU?

An **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)**, also known as a 'laneway home' or 'carriage home', is an independent, detached living space that includes its own kitchen, bathroom, sleeping, and living area. ADUs are situated on the same legal lot as a primary residential unit, such as a single-family home, and are typically located in the backyard or above a garage.

Why build an ADU?

Building an ADU can be an attractive option for homeowners because of their range of uses and benefits, including financial gain, and flexibility around evolving family housing needs. ADUs contribute positively to community development by addressing issues such as urban sprawl, housing shortages, and affordability challenges. By providing more housing options within existing neighborhoods, ADUs support sustainable infill development and help to accommodate diverse housing needs.

Can I operate a short-term rental business within an ADU?

Within the District of Ucluelet, ADUs are exclusively for **residential use** and cannot be used for commercial tourist accommodation.

Key Benefits



Rental Income

Earn income by renting out your ADU to long-term tenants, or by renting your main home while downsizing and living in the ADU.



Property Value

Enhance your property's value and market appeal by adding an ADU.



Flexible, Multi-Generational Living Space

An ADU provides a versatile space to adapt to changing family needs over the years; allowing adult children to live independently while staying close to home, offering a comfortable and secure residence for elderly parents to age in place, or providing private accommodations for guests or caretakers.



Community Benefit

Be part of creating diverse and affordable housing options for other community members.

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ADU GUIDE

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2 Plan Your Project

GETTING STARTED: A Step-by-Step Overview

STEP 1 Can I build an ADU?

The zoning bylaw outlines which uses are allowed in which areas. ADUs are allowed within all zones where *Accessory Residential Dwelling Unit* is listed as a 'secondary use', and where a 'primary use' is established on the property.

To find your zone, use our interactive zoning map online at www.ucluelet.ca/community/ukeemap.

STEP 2 Review Regulations

When designing your ADU, ensure that your site and building plans comply with the all relevant District of Ucluelet bylaws, and BC Building Code. Key zoning bylaw and land use regulations are summarized in **section 3** of this document, and links to applicable documents are within **section 4**.

Need help?

Applicants are encouraged to discuss their plans early on with staff. For land use inquiries, email planning@ucluelet.ca. For building and code inquiries email building@ucluelet.ca.

STEP 3 Cost Estimation

The cost of constructing an ADU is highly variable depending on topography, location, design, size and material choices.

Average construction cost in the region has been estimated at around \$400-450 per sq. ft. Construction of an ADU between 450 sq. ft to the maximum of 968 sq. ft may range between around \$180,000 to \$435,600.

See Table 1 for detailed cost considerations.

Post-construction costs to consider:

- Adding an ADU will increase property taxes as a result of increased property value.
- You may see increases in annual water, sewer and waste collection costs. Contact the [ACRD](#) for information on waste collection charges.

The province has introduced the **Secondary Suite Incentive Program** to help homeowners create affordable housing in their communities. The program will provide money to help homeowners create a new secondary suite or ADU on their property to be rented out for below market value for a required period of time.

Learn more: BCHousing.org

Project management

Many applicants choose to work with a Registered Architect, License Residential Builder or other professional with experience in home building/design to take care of the application process.

Visit the [Architectural Institute of BC](#), the [BC Association of Building Designers](#), or BC Housing [License Registry](#) for online directories where you can search for residential design and building professionals within the area.

Owner Builder

If you wish to build an ADU yourself, provincial regulations require that you pass the Owner Builder Exam offered through BC Housing. This is required even if you plan to subcontract parts of the project.

Learn more at BC Housing: <https://www.bchousing.org/licensing-consumer-services/owner-builder>

Table 1. Estimated Costs

Item	Cost Estimate Details
Water and sewer connection	No connection charge if there is already a residential dwelling on the property. You are responsible for any necessary construction costs to extend the servicing lines or increase water line size. Contact Public Works to inquire about costs specific to your property.
Hydro connection (electrical)	Service extension may be required; the costs for this are highly variable. Contact BC Hydro for a quote.
Gas (if required)	\$25 and up. Contact FortisBC for a quote.
Building permit fee	Contingent on construction costs. Rates are \$100 for the first \$1000 of assessed value, and \$9 for each subsequent \$1000 (ie. a project valued at \$200,000 will be charged a building permit fee of \$1891).
Development permit fee (if applicable)	\$1000.
Lot consolidation (if applicable)	If a new building will straddle an internal lot line, or be constructed within the required setbacks of a lot line, even if you own both lots, the subject lots must be consolidated. Contact the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia or a law office for cost information.
Sprinkler system (if applicable)	If the ADU is further than 45m from a lot line fronting road access, or site circumstances such as steepness or width of the proposed access route results in restricted access, automatic sprinkler systems are required. Typical costs are \$3-9 per square foot.
Covenant registration	Approximately \$1000.
Other costs include, but are not limited to, construction, design, landscaping, land surveying, plumbing and electrical, engineering, environmental assessment...	Contact a professional for estimates.

STEP 4 Development & Building Permits

Your project may require both development and building permits. In this case it is recommended to apply simultaneously to reduce processing time. Links to application forms and checklists can be found in **section 4** of this document. Alternatively, you can pick up forms at the District of Ucluelet office.

Development Permit

If your property is within a development permit area, planning staff will review your plans to verify alignment with the guidelines outlined within our [Official Community Plan](#).

Building Permit

A building permit is required to construct the new ADU or renovate the existing structure. If a development permit is required, the building permit is not issued until the development permit is approved. The building inspector processes applications and reviews building plans to ensure compliance with the B.C. Building Code, municipal bylaws, policies and other regulations as applicable.

Many documents are required to submit a complete application. See the Building Application Form and Checklist for more details. Where a Service Agreement is required, it must be signed and paid in advance of receiving the building permit.

STEP 5 Construction & Servicing

Construction

Once you have obtained your building permit, you can begin construction. Regular inspections will be conducted at various stages to ensure compliance with all regulations.

Servicing

You will need to arrange for connections to municipal services such as water, sewer, electricity, and gas. This will involve submitting a municipal services application to the [Engineering/Public Works department](#), as well as coordinating with local utility providers and inspectors to ensure all hookups are completed according to the required standards.

STEP 6 Obtaining Occupancy

Once construction and utility connections are complete, you can arrange for final inspections with the Building Inspector and relevant authorities to ensure that everything is built to plan.

Upon passing final inspections and registering a restrictive covenant on the ADU (see **p.9**), an occupancy permit will be granted, allowing you to legally occupy and use the ADU.

Converting an accessory building?

It may be possible to convert an existing accessory building into a ADU. The process, however, is different from the construction of a new ADU and may require additional steps to complete the necessary applications.

Step 1: Determine if your existing accessory building complies with the zoning and land use regulations, and what alterations or variances may be required. Contact Planning staff if you have questions.

Step 2: Work with a Registered Architect, Licensed Residential Builder or other professional with experience in home building/design to complete a **Building Code Assessment Report**. This will allow you to determine how your accessory building must be modified to meet the BC Building Code for residential use. Provide this report as part of your building permit application submission.



3 Land Use

In addition to the regulations outlined within your property zone, **Section 408** of the zoning bylaw provides regulations specific to ADUs.

Siting

Setbacks specified in the zoning bylaw determine the minimum distance your ADU must be from each property line. Additionally, ADUs must be situated at least 4 meters away from the main dwelling on your property.

When planning the location of your ADU, also consider the following factors:

1. Covenants / Easements

Review any existing covenants or easements on your property title, as they may impose additional restrictions or requirements affecting the placement of your ADU.

2. Building Schemes

Check for any applicable building schemes that may outline specific guidelines or restrictions regarding the design and location of structures on your property.

3. Development Permit Areas (DPAs)

Identify if your property falls within a DPA, as this could require additional approvals or adherence to specific guidelines, for example to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

4. Designated Yard Space

Ensure that yard space designated for use of ADU tenants is at minimum equal to gross floor area of the ADU.

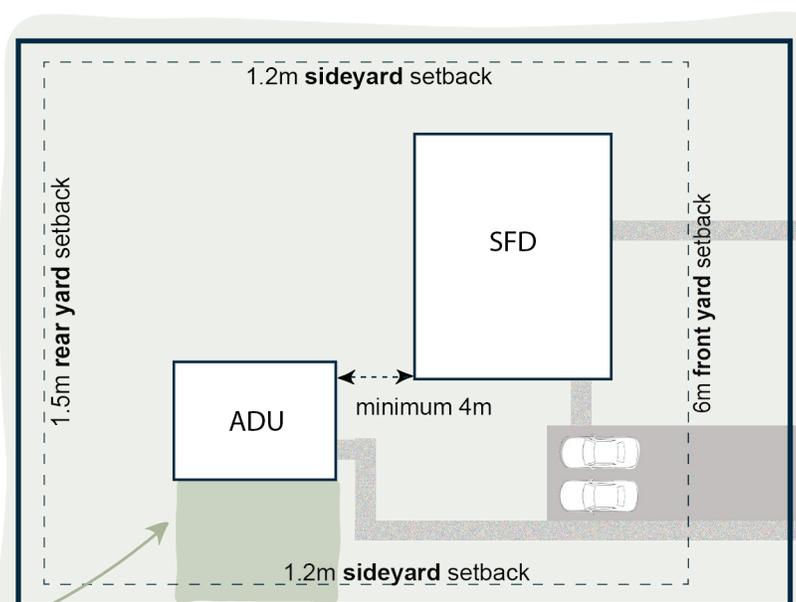
5. Emergency Access

Plan for access to the ADU to meet safety requirements and facilitate emergency response if needed. See **p.9** for more details.

6. Off-street Parking

Assess off-street parking requirements to determine that there is adequate space for vehicles, which is often a key factor in the approval process. See **p.9** for more details.

Figure 1. ADU siting and setbacks (R-1 zone)





Size

The maximum **gross floor area**¹ of an ADU is 7% of the total lot area to a maximum of 90 sq. m (968 sq. ft.). An ADU also cannot contain more than 2 bedrooms.

Ensure that the ADU, in addition to the existing buildings on your property, does not exceed **lot coverage**² or **floor area ratio**³ limits.

Although there is no minimum floor area requirement, the ADU must adhere to the standards of the BC Building Code.

Height

The maximum height of an ADU within any zone is **8m (two storeys)**.

Height is calculated from **average natural grade**⁴ to the highest point of the building.

¹ Gross floor area

Total area of all floors, measured to exterior of building walls (exclude unfinished basement area/crawlspace)

² Lot coverage

Percentage of the lot that is occupied by buildings/ structures (ie. divide total building footprint area by lot area)

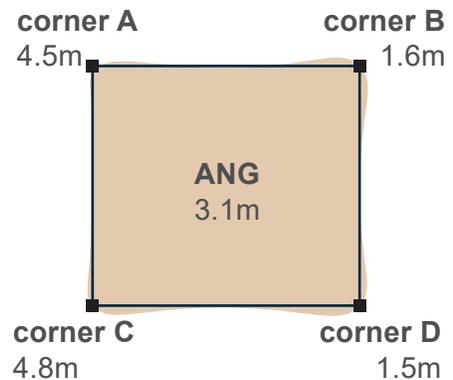
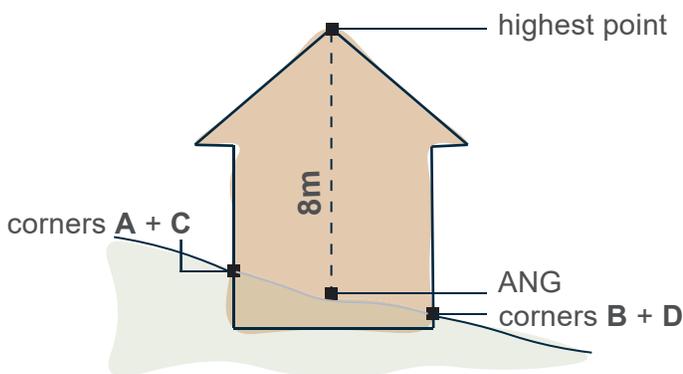
³ Floor area ratio (FAR)

Gross floor area of all buildings on the lot relative to lot size (ie. divide gross floor area by lot area)

⁴ Average natural grade (ANG)

Undisturbed ground elevation measured at each building corner (ie. corner A+B+C+D = ANG)

Figure 2. Measuring height



OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Parking

One off-street parking space is required for each dwelling unit (ie. 2 spaces if there is an ADU plus an existing home).

A standard parking space is 6m x 2.5m (20' x 8'). Maximum driveway width is 7m. See Division 500 of the zoning bylaw for all regulations.

Emergency Access

Safe access to the suite is important to ensure that emergency responders can access the unit with necessary equipment during emergencies.

A minimum 1 metre wide, hardpacked and unobstructed path (with no sudden drop-offs) is required from the street to the entrance of the suite. Overhead clearance must be maintained, and any stairs or ramps along the pathway must also adhere to building code.

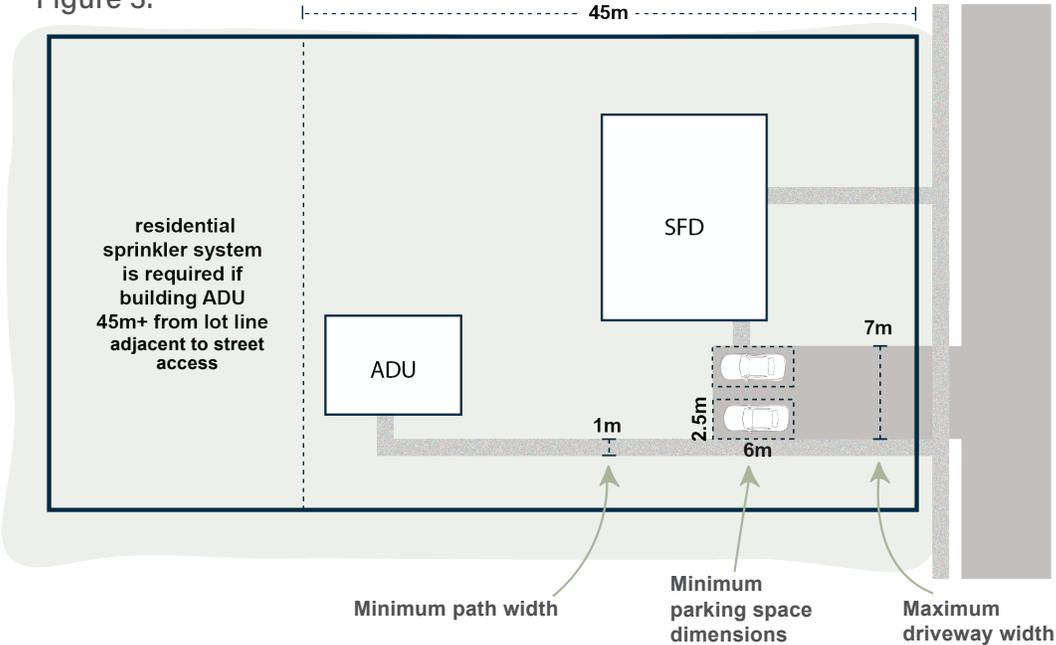
Civic Address

ADUs are given the label "A" in conjunction with the main civic address (ie. "165A Elm Street"). If a secondary suite already exists on the property, the ADU would be labelled "B". The address must be easily visible from the street.

Restrictive Covenant

A section 219 covenant must be registered on title prior to receiving occupancy, which ensures that the portion of the lot containing the ADU is not subdivided. See **section 4** for a template.

Figure 3.



4 Resources

Additional Resources

- [Home Suite Home Guide](#)
- [Secondary Suite Incentive Program](#)

Building & Land Use

- [BC Building Code](#)
- [Becoming an Owner Builder](#)
- [Official Community Plan](#)
- [Zoning Bylaw](#)
- [Environmental DPA Map \(Schedule E\)](#)
- [Form & Character DPA Map \(Schedule F\)](#)
- [Fees & Charges Bylaw](#)

Directories

- [Architectural Institute of BC](#)
- [BC Association of Building Designers](#)
- [BC Housing Licensed Home Builders](#)
- [Association of BC Land Surveyors](#)

Housing Resources

- [Landlord BC](#)
- [Housing & Tenancy](#)

Forms & Documents

- [Building Permit Application Form](#)
- [Building Permit Checklist](#)
- [Development Application Form](#)
- [Development Checklist](#)
- [Municipal Services Application Forms](#)
- [Owners Authorization Form](#)
- [ADU Covenant Template](#)
- [Residential Conversion Guide](#)

Do you need more information?
We're here to help!

Contacts



District Office

Call (250) 726-7744, email info@ucluelet.ca or drop by the District of Ucluelet office between 8:30am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday.



Planning

Contact planning@ucluelet.ca for land use questions or development applications.



Building

Contact building@ucluelet.ca for building code questions or building permit applications.



Engineering/Public Works

Call (250) 726-7133 for utilities/servicing questions, or municipal services applications.

Looking for property records?

Some records can be released informally (ie. building and occupancy permits), while others require a formal request under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Submit requests to info@ucluelet.ca using the [Request for Access to Records](#) form.