

Accessory Dwelling Units in Austin

(Alley Flats, Secondary Dwelling Units)

As Austin leaders explore ways to increase household affordability, many small impacts are needed in combination to increase affordability. A tool in Austin's "affordability toolbox" is the development of small secondary homes that share a lot with a primary residence.

Often called "alley flats" or "secondary dwelling units," these are known in the Austin City Code as "Secondary Apartments." These ADUs are considered "self-contained" homes because they include a bathroom and kitchen.

What is an ADU?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit, or ADU, is a secondary, usually smaller unit on a property with a primary house. It is self-contained with its own bathroom and kitchen. ADUs come in all shapes and sizes (up to 850 square feet) and can include stand-alone one-story and two-story units as well as those above garages.

Are ADUs currently allowed in Austin?

ADUs are allowed on Single-Family-3 lots that are at least 7,000 square feet. They are also allowed on Single-Family-2 and Single-Family-3 zoned properties that are at least 5,750 square feet in neighborhood planning areas that adopted the secondary apartment infill option

Where are ADUs in Austin?

ADUs, both permitted and unpermitted, are throughout the city. From 2007-2014, about 275 ADUs were permitted and built.

What are benefits of ADUs?

ADUs provide flexibility and options for Austin homeowners and renters, such as:

- A place for elderly parents, caretakers or grown children
- Collect rent from a second unit to offset your household costs
- Afford to rent a secondary unit in a single-family neighborhood

What are some common concerns with ADUs?

As with any type of development, design aesthetics, parking and neighborhood acceptance/relationships should be thoughtfully considered.

Why is the issue of ADUs timely?

The Austin City Council has called for an ordinance to make it easier to build ADUs. The Planning Commission will review the issue April 28, 2015. Additionally, increasing household affordability is a priority for the City of Austin and efforts such as CodeNEXT and work of the Community Development Commission.