

Accessory Dwelling Units / Accessory Living Units

	Alexandria	Arlington	Fairfax
Occupancy Limit	Up to three (3) persons.	Up to three (3) persons.	Up to two (2) persons.
Permit	Required (administrative staff approval, no hearing required)	Required	Required
Processing Time & Fees	Application review completed within 10 business days if complete. Approval does not authorize construction; separate permits required. Notice posted on property and sent to community/civic association upon approval. Deed recordation required with Clerk of Circuit Court Land Records Division.	Application typically takes 30 days. \$200 application fee, \$70 renewal fee. Additional processes and approvals may be required during review, including building permits and health department approvals for well or septic systems.	Application takes approximately 30 days. \$200 application fee, \$70 renewal fee. Additional approvals may include fire alarm systems, permits for construction or compliance, and health department documentation for well or septic systems.
Form	Detached structures and within the main house (including townhouses)	Can be within a detached accessory building (e.g., detached garage) or attached to the main dwelling (e.g., basement apartment, addition).	Must be wholly contained within the structure of a single-family detached dwelling unit, with direct access through a finished, temperature-controlled interior space. Additional allowances for detached structures with special permits.
Limitations	Only one ADU per lot. ADU can't be used as a short-term rental for more than 120 days per year. Owner must maintain the subject property as their primary residence at the time of ADU permitting. ADU can't be sold as a separate housing unit	Accessory dwellings shall not be permitted on lots containing duplex or multi-family dwellings. The ADU is rental only and cannot be sold as a separate housing unit.	Only one structure per lot permitted. ALUs are only permitted in association with single-family detached dwellings (i.e., no townhouses, duplexes, etc.). Only properties with at least two acres may apply for a detached accessory living unit. The accessory dwelling shall not be a short-term residential rental. There cannot be two additional roomers or boarders in the primary residence.
Owner-Occupancy Requirements	Owner must maintain the subject property as their primary residence at the time of ADU permitting	In addition to the applicant owning the property where the AD will be located, the property owner/applicant must use either the main dwelling or the AD as their primary residence. If the property owner does not use either the main dwelling or the AD as their primary residence, the entire property cannot be occupied by more than one (1) family.	Principal dwelling unit must be owner-occupied

Size Requirements	ADUs within the main house can't exceed one-third of the main house's gross square footage. Maximum footprint: 350 square feet for lots smaller than 2,500 square feet and 500 square feet for lots larger than 2,500 square feet. Maximum height: 20 feet or height of main house, whichever is less.	No specific size limit for ADs within basements. ADs above basements limited by percentage of combined floor area, up to 750 sq ft. Detached ADs have specific size and setback restrictions based on zoning district, but the AD cannot exceed 35% or 45% of the GFA of the main structure, depending on the structure's size.	Maximum 800 sq ft or 40% of principal dwelling's gross floor area, whichever is less. Larger sizes possible with special permits. Detached ADs have size limits up to 1,200 sq ft and must be subordinate to main dwelling.
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Parking	Exempt from providing off-street parking	1 off-street parking space required, with exceptions based on neighborhood parking surveys.	Must provide parking for principal dwelling plus 1 additional space. Parking must have convenient access to street. Special provisions for lots without off-street parking.
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Approved	63 since 07/16/21	<p>The Accessory Dwelling Ordinance was passed in July 2008. In 2017, to spur production, the ordinance was updated allowing <i>existing detached structures</i> to be renovated into AD's. Then in 2019, the ordinance was further expanded to allow <i>new detached AD's to be constructed</i>.</p> <p>A total of 196 have been created since 2008, with over 100 since 2019.</p>	
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