

INTRODUCTION

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is an additional living space located on the same property as an original, larger residence.

They're often called by other names: granny flats, mother-in-law units, casitas, ECHO units and dozens of others.

ADUs can offer affordable accommodation to elderly relatives or children returning home, or they can be rented out to contribute toward mortgages and other associated housing costs.

The concept isn't new; it was a common housing option for multi-generational families and for returning soldiers after WWII. But with the growth of the suburbs and the dominance of single-family zoning, ADUs were often prohibited.

Today, however, more communities are allowing ADUs as a way to solve local housing availability and affordability issues -- a problem that has become a national crisis.

ADUs can take many forms, but the three basic types are interior, attached and detached:

- An **interior ADU** utilizes existing space within the primary dwelling through the conversion of an interior room such as an attic or basement.
- An **attached ADU** is added to the front, side or rear of the primary structure, or often constructed above an attached garage.
- A **detached ADU** is structurally separate from the primary dwelling. It can be built as a stand-alone unit or added to an existing structure such as a detached garage.

Although ADUs are usually smaller than the primary residence, they often contain the same essential amenities such as a kitchen, bathroom, living room or bedroom, depending on the available space and intended use.

BENEFITS

- Allows elderly to age in place;
- Close help for child rearing and/or elder care;
- Affordable housing options;
- Housing options for workforce, especially in communities facing labor issues;
- Additional income to support principal residence.



Image Source: American Planning Association

DRAWBACKS

- The property owner may have difficulty subdividing the two dwelling units in the future;
- Developers may create additional units as investment opportunities instead of providing additional housing options at an affordable price;
- Sharing of electric, water, sanitary and storm sewer systems;
- Construction must assure access by emergency services;
- Possible of limited parking availability;
- Compatibility of design with the existing neighborhood;
- Adequate infrastructure to support another dwelling unit;
- Tax clarification for more than one residence on a single lot.

RESOURCES

- TCRPC Accessory Use Model Ordinance
- Lebanon County Resources
- Chester County Resources
- General ADU Guidelines
- AIA Practices

RELATED FACT SHEETS ON PLANNINGTOOLKIT.ORG

- Form Based Codes
- Tiny Houses

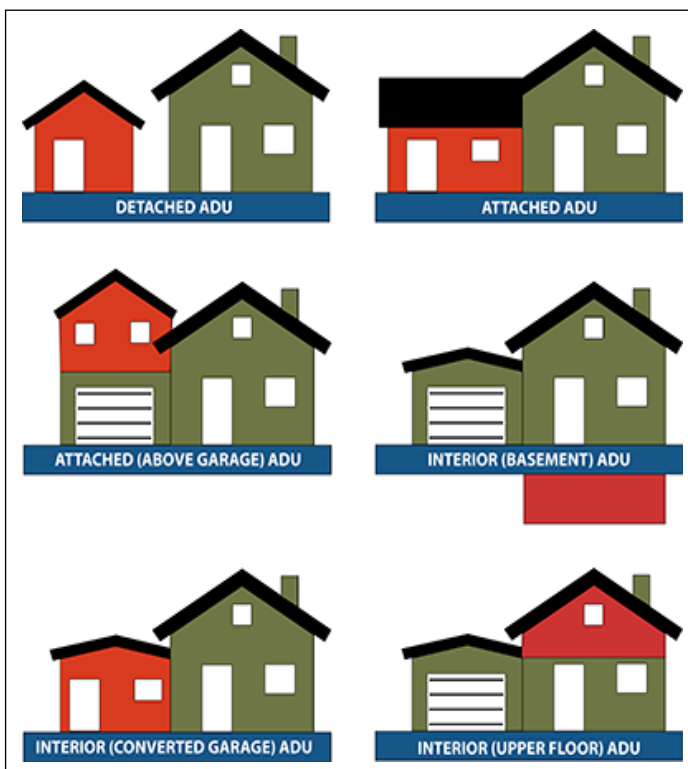


Image Source: American Planning Association

TIPS TO CONSIDER

- **CONSIDER PUBLIC OUTREACH TO ADDRESS CONCERN THAT ADU'S WILL ALTER COMMUNITY CHARACTER;**
- **CONSIDER ALLOWANCE THROUGH SPECIAL USE PERMIT;**
- **ALLOW ADU'S AS A USE BY RIGHT, REDUCING TIME AND LOWERING COST;**
- **ALLOWANCE BY RIGHT DOESN'T PRECLUDE MUNICIPALITY CREATING CONTROLS AND CONDITIONS;**
- **CONSIDER ALLOWING ADU'S IN CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS.**

Visit our toolkit page at www.planningtoolkit.org for more planning topics:

PLANNING TOOLKIT

TCRPC launched this online planning toolkit in 2022 as a service to Central Pennsylvania's municipalities, as well as citizens and local governments around the commonwealth.

The downloadable files, organized by topic, offer a wide range of policies and techniques that promote Smart Growth principles and good government practices. Each includes an overview of the topic along with resources available at the local, regional and state levels.

We've also included a section of model ordinances that can be adapted for local needs.

If there's a topic you'd like us to include, please [let us know](#).



CREATED BY
TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
112 Market St., 2nd Fl., Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 234-2639
planning@tcrpc-pa.org