



Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations: Overview February 2025

In 2024, Governor Maura Healey signed The Affordable Homes Act (AHA) into law, authorizing over \$5 billion in spending over five years and advancing nearly 50 policy initiatives ([learn more here](#)). The AHA includes one of The Arc of Massachusetts' top priorities: allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to be built by right in single family zoning districts. ADUs are residential living spaces that are located on the same lot as another dwelling. ADUs can be within a home (example: basement apartment) or detached (example: garage/shed conversion). ADUs are an important tool to give individuals with disabilities the opportunity to live independently in their community, while ensuring that support is nearby.

This fact sheet summarizes the recently released regulations ([which you can see here](#)), promulgated by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC).

Summary of Key Regulations

- ADUs can be built by right in single-family zoning districts. Approval by a local zoning board is not required.
- ADUs can be no larger than half the gross floor area of the principal dwelling, or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller (example: if a home is 1,700 square feet, then the maximum size for the ADU would be 850 square feet).
- ADUs must have a separate entrance, either directly from outside or through a hall or corridor shared with the principal residence. ADUs must have sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities.
- The regulations include details about what additional rules cities and towns can implement and which they cannot. If allowed by the regulations and instituted by a city or town, ADUs must comply.
 - Cities and towns are permitted to include the following:
 - Setback and height restrictions
 - Restrictions or bans on short-term rental use
 - Require a site-plan review
 - Title V requirements, related to septic systems
 - Cities and towns are not permitted to include the following:
 - Require owner-occupancy or family relationships for the ADU or principal dwelling
 - Require special permits or other approvals for the use or rental of the ADU
 - Require more than one parking space for an ADU located outside 0.5 miles from public transit; require any parking for an ADU located within 0.5 miles of public transit.

Resources & Contact

- EOHLC is adding materials to [this webpage](#), including model ADU zoning, webinars, and FAQs.
- Municipalities can get assistance and apply for funding [here](#).
- EOHLC Contact: EOHLCADUHomes@Mass.gov
- The Arc of Massachusetts Contact: Nora Bent, Director of Government Affairs & Strategic Partnerships | nbent@arcmass.org