

**HOUSING  
SOLUTIONS  
PARTNERSHIP**

# Accessory Dwelling Units

A Small Solution to Help with a  
Big Housing Problem

[www.housingni.org](http://www.housingni.org)

# ABOUT ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Kootenai County has a shortage of housing for local workers. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) — also known as granny flats, in-law suites, backyard cottages and Accessory Living Units (ALUs) — offer a practical solution to help address these challenges.

As a ToolKit item in the Housing Solutions Partnership effort to increase the affordability and availability of local worker housing, a volunteer committee sent out a request for proposals in November 2023. More than 25 submissions were received from architects, draftsmen and designers. A group of past presidents of the North Idaho Building Contractors Association (NIBCA) chose four plans that are being made available to the public free of charge. This helps remove a financial barrier for building ADUs for some community members and provides an opportunity for additional local worker housing in our region.

Additionally, given the plans have been reviewed by all regional building departments, the builder can reduce weeks of waiting for permits and approvals to start the project, creating an additional cost savings advantage. This white paper outlines numerous benefits ADUs can provide for communities in Kootenai County.

## **Infill Housing**

ADUs serve as an effective form of infill housing, utilizing existing land and infrastructure. They are located on single-family residential lots that have a main home and are required to meet certain size, setback, height and other zoning and building requirements specific to the community in which they are located, ensuring their compatibility in the neighborhood. By taking advantage of underutilized spaces such as backyards or garages, ADUs can increase housing density without compromising the character of the existing neighborhood. This approach promotes responsible development and efficient land use.

## **Financial Gain for Homeowners**

ADUs provide homeowners with an opportunity for financial gain. By renting out the ADU (or as some retirees desire, renting the main home and downsizing to the ADU themselves) homeowners can generate additional income to offset mortgage payments or other increasing expenses. This financial flexibility can contribute to homeowners' financial stability, improve their overall quality of life and allow them to remain in their home longer.

## **Independent Living on the Same Property**

ADUs offer a practical solution for accommodating extended family members. Whether it's aging parents, adult children or other relatives, ADUs provide a separate living space while maintaining proximity to the main residence on the same property. This arrangement promotes intergenerational living, fosters stronger family bonds, enhances the overall well-being of the family unit, can provide caregiver accommodations, and is a cost-saving measure for many families. This option for growing families may not increase the number of people living on the same property, it just affords them all a higher quality of life, more flexibility as lifestyle needs change and independence.

## **Housing for Local Workers**

Our region is struggling to provide affordable housing options for local workers. ADUs can serve as an attractive housing option for employees, allowing them to live closer to their workplace and reducing

commute times and traffic volume. This not only improves the quality of life for workers but strengthens the local economy by retaining skilled professionals within the community.

The committee looked at ADU codes for all participating jurisdictions and determined that by meeting Coeur d'Alene's square foot limitation, it would work in other participating jurisdictions, too. Participating jurisdictions include Post Falls, Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai County. ADUs may also be permitted in certain neighborhoods in Hayden. Please contact your community's Planning Department to find out if an ADU or ALU is allowed on your property.

The committee encourages all communities within Kootenai County to allow ADUs on single-family residential lots. The data shows that providing this simple solution of free, pre-approved plans that protect neighborhoods will bolster local worker housing giving our communities the opportunity to grow and thrive.

It should be noted that each jurisdiction has different zoning and building codes for the building of ADUs. Anyone wishing to build an ADU on their property will be instructed within the plan sets to first check with the Building and Planning Departments of their community to learn if ADUs/ALUs are legal in their zoning district and what codes and conditions apply.

### **Where can I get a free ADU plan set?**

The ADU plan sets, disclaimers and instructions are available at the Housing Solutions Partnership's website at [www.housingni.org](http://www.housingni.org) and [www.nibca.com](http://www.nibca.com). The following jurisdictions and organizations will also have the plans available on their websites: [City of Coeur d'Alene](#), [City of Hayden](#), [City of Post Falls](#), and [Panhandle Affordable Housing Alliance](#). This project will be reviewed quarterly. The addendum, locations and updated information will be updated each quarter.

### **Who do I contact for more information?**

Please see the Addendum for information specific to each jurisdiction in Kootenai County and contact information.

### **What if my ADU needs to be connected to a septic system?**

In addition to jurisdiction-specific regulations, ADUs that will be connected to a septic system must comply with State of Idaho requirements for subsurface sewage disposal. Septic systems serving ADUs must be sized properly to accommodate wastewater from all residences on a parcel. There are several common situations that could limit the ability of a septic system to accommodate an additional dwelling, including shared septic systems, community septic systems, and drainfield easements with space constraints. If expansion of a septic system will be required to service an ADU, an expansion septic permit will be required before any ADU building permits can be approved. Please [contact Panhandle Health District](#) as early as possible in the planning process to verify that the septic system can accommodate an additional dwelling and to determine the steps necessary to upgrade existing septic systems.

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# ADDENDUM

Some, but not all, communities in Kootenai County permit construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Zoning and building codes also vary among the jurisdictions in Kootenai County. Use this addendum to determine if ADUs are allowed in your community, and what special regulations or exemptions may apply. Please review the disclaimer that applies to each of the ADU plan sets being made available for free use. These plans are only for use in Kootenai County.

## City of Athol

**Are ADUs permitted in Athol?** No. Athol’s zoning code does not permit ADUs due to wastewater restrictions. Because the city does not have municipal sewer service, wastewater disposal is regulated by the Panhandle Health District under a sewage management agreement (SMA) between the city and the health district. Under PHD rules and the SMA, an ADU is considered a second dwelling unit which would require a second wastewater allotment (or “dwelling equivalent” or “DE” in the terms of the SMA). The vast majority of lots in the city only have a single DE available to them.

## City of Coeur d’Alene

**Are ADUs permitted in Coeur d’Alene?** Yes, Coeur d’Alene allows ADUs on property where there is only one single-family detached home.

**Is there a maximum square footage or size based on the size of the main house in Coeur d’Alene?** Yes, Coeur d’Alene allows an ADU to be up to 75 percent of the floor area of the principal dwelling, up to a maximum of 800 square feet, excluding the garage area.

**What other requirements does Coeur d’Alene have for ADUs?** Either the principal dwelling unit or the ADU must be occupied by a majority owner of the property if a unit is used as a short-term or vacation rental. A property owner may not rent out both as short-term rentals. Additionally, if an ADU is going to be used for less than 30-day stays, the owner must comply with the City’s short-term rental requirements in [Chapter 17.08, Article X of Title 17 \(Zoning\)](#).

Three paved parking stalls will be required for any home where an ADU is being added. The requirement is for one paved 9-by-20-foot off-street parking stall for the ADU and two paved 9-by-20-foot parking spaces for the primary dwelling unit.

**Where would I look for setback requirements for ADUs in Coeur d’Alene?** Click on [this link](#) to see the code language regarding [setbacks for ADUs](#).

**Does Coeur d’Alene require a scaled site plan to be submitted as part of the permit application?** Yes. Please [click here for the ADU application form](#) that contains a list of required submittals that must be submitted along with the building permit application.

**Where can I view ADU plans that are approved for use in the City of Coeur d’Alene?** ADU plans can be viewed at [www.housingni.org](http://www.housingni.org)

**Who do I contact with questions or for more information about building an ADU in Coeur d'Alene?** Contact the Planning Department at (208) 769-2274 or the Building Department at (208) 769-2267.

### **City of Dalton Gardens**

**Are ADUs permitted in the City of Dalton Gardens?** No. City code prohibits Accessory Living Units or ADUs.

### **City of Fernan Lake Village**

**Are ADUs permitted in the City of Fernan Lake Village?** Please see Fernan Lake Village's [code governing ADUs](#) and the use of ADUs as rentals.

### **City of Harrison**

**Are ADUs permitted in the City of Harrison?** City Council approval is required for Accessory Buildings, the city's term for ADUs which will be used as dwellings.

**What other requirements does the City of Harrison have for ADUs?** The city has setback requirements among other restrictions. ADUs are not allowed within areas that are special flood hazard areas.

### **City of Hauser Lake**

**Are ADUs permitted in the City of Hauser?** No. The City of Hauser currently does not allow ADUs, however their council and staff are taking the issue under advisement in the coming months.

### **City of Hayden**

**Are ADUs permitted in the City of Hayden?** Yes, but ADUs must comply with the criteria set out in [Hayden City Code](#).

**Where can I view ADU plans that are approved for use in the City of Hayden?** ADU plans can be viewed at [www.housingni.org](http://www.housingni.org)

**Who do I contact with questions or for more information about building an ADU in the City of Hayden?** Contact the Building or Planning Departments at (208) 209-2022.

### **City of Hayden Lake**

TBD

## **Kootenai County (ADUs in Unincorporated Kootenai County)**

**Are ADUs permitted in Kootenai County?** Yes, but county regulations require that any dwelling unit located over the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer (RPA) be located on at least 5 acres. This regulation dates back to 1977 and is intended to preserve water quality over the aquifer. Any ADU proposed over the RPA will need to be on a parcel of land that is at least 10 acres in size (5 acres for the principal dwelling unit, and another 5 acres for the ADU.).

**Is there a maximum square footage or size based on the size of the main house in Kootenai County?** Kootenai County's existing ADU regulations limit the size of ADUs to 1,000 square feet, or one-half the area of the existing home, whichever is greater. If a proposed ADU is 1,000 square feet or less, these preapproved plans will presumably work fine. However, if the ADU is more than 1,000 square feet, or if someone wants to build a new structure that is more than one-half the floor area of their existing home, then they will need to claim the new structure as the principal home and forgo the use of the free plans.

**Who do I contact with questions or for more information about building an ADU in Kootenai County?** Contact the Planning Department at (208) 446-1070 or the Building Department at (208) 446-1040. You can also visit the county website at <https://kcgov.us/219/Community-Development>

## **City of Post Falls**

**Are ADUs permitted in Post Falls?** Yes. Post Falls allows ADUs as secondary dwellings to single-family homes. The ADU may be detached or attached to the primary residence and must have its own electricity, kitchen and sanitary facilities. The city has additional requirements for ADUs, including:

- If detached, the ADU is required to be set back behind the front of the primary residence. On a corner lot, the ADU may be placed in front of the primary residence on the street side yard.
- Only one ADU is allowed on a lot.
- One of the residences must be owner occupied.
- One additional paved off-street parking space must be provided.
- Building materials must be consistent with the primary residence.
- No more than one entrance to the ADU may be visible from the street.
- The ADU cannot have a separate drive approach, unless the drive approach is from a rear-loaded alley or side street on a corner lot.
- The primary entrance must be clearly visible and oriented toward the public street.
- The ADU can be no larger than 50 percent of the living area of the primary residence, and no more than 1,000 square feet (whichever is smaller).
- An existing accessory structure may be converted to an ADU such that it meets all currently adopted building code requirements.

**What are the requirements for building permits for ADUs?** Post Falls requires a detailed site plan drawn to scale, including the entire property extents, setbacks, all existing and proposed structures with

labels and square footage of floor area and footprint, etc. The ADU must comply with all lot coverage, height limitations and setback requirements for the underlying zoning designation.

**Who do I contact with questions or for more information about building an ADU in the City of Post Falls?** Contact the Community Development Department at (208) 773-8708

**Where can I view ADU plans that are approved for use in the City of Post Falls?** ADU plans can be viewed on the city's website at <https://www.postfalls.gov> or at [www.housingni.org](http://www.housingni.org).

## **City of Rathdrum**

**Are ADUs permitted in Rathdrum?** Although the current code does not allow for detached Accessory Dwelling Units, the City of Rathdrum allows ADUs as a Conditional Use in residential zoning districts that are otherwise restricted to a single dwelling unit.

- An ADU must be developed as a result of converting existing living area, attic, basement or attached garage, or adding floor area to an existing single family residence.
- An ADU may be no greater than 75% of the building footprint of the primary residence, excluding garage area, or eight hundred square feet (800 sq. ft.), whichever is lesser.
- An ADU may be no smaller than four hundred (400) sq ft in area.
- An ADU may include only one (1) bedroom.
- Either the ADU or the primary residence must be owner occupied.
- ADUs are not permitted within two (2) years of the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy of the primary residence AND/OR within a subdivision or plat where more than fifteen percent (15%) of the lots within the entire subdivision remain undeveloped.

Full details may be found in Rathdrum City Code (RCC) 15-6-2-J See [City of Rathdrum Code 15-6-2-J](#) for more information.

## **Rose Lake**

TBD

## **City of Spirit Lake**

**Are ADUs permitted in Spirit Lake?** Not currently. The City of Spirit Lake is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan and is drafting ordinance updates to allow ADUs in Spirit Lake. These updates must be approved by the city council.

## **City of Worley**

TBD

# DISCLAIMERS

## **Please note the following considerations when using the Accessory Dwelling Unit preapproved drawings:**

1. Property owners are advised to verify their address and confirm the jurisdiction they live in.
2. The plans are designed to meet National Building codes and consider local Idaho codes, but each ADU may require adjustments due to topography, access, soil and grade, and changing municipal and county codes. Local requirements over time may necessitate modifications to comply with snow loads, energy codes, soil and seismic regulations and various changes prior to permit applications. Check with your local building department on your specific ADU on your lot.
3. The designers of the pre-approved plans and drawings CANNOT MAKE ANY WARRANTY, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, WITH THE CONTENT OR USE OF THEIR DESIGNS AS FIT FOR PURPOSE FOR HOMEOWNERS OR BUILDERS OF THEIR CONCEPTS.
4. Through the designers' approval to share these designs, they rescind all copyright authority with the intent to advance housing options for ONLY these particular concepts.
5. Owners and builders/developers using these particular ADU designs must provide the site plan and location of main dwelling, outbuildings and ADU meeting all municipal or county setbacks, utilities and topography to the local statutes and standards.
6. Owners and builders/developers will hold harmless any claims towards the hosts of ADU plan sets and their affiliates resulting in accepting/using the ADU plan sets.
7. There are items that are site specific and must be addressed by the property owner and/or builder at the time of submittal. Please see the following notes for requirements for each of the ADU plan sets.
  - Heating systems must be identified, and all heat load and energy calculations must be completed accordingly.
  - Dryer duct length tag is required depending on equipment used.
  - Minimum 50% high efficiency lighting to be installed.
  - Whole house ventilation required.
  - Trusses must be designed based on the specific location of the site. Differing snow loads may cause changes to beams, and or concrete requirements and must be determined on a case-by-case basis.
  - Manufactured floor framing sheets to be required on site for inspections where wood floors are used.
  - Clarification on ventilated or conditioned crawlspaces where applicable.
  - Some plans will require concrete, steel and structural designs to be determined.